IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY

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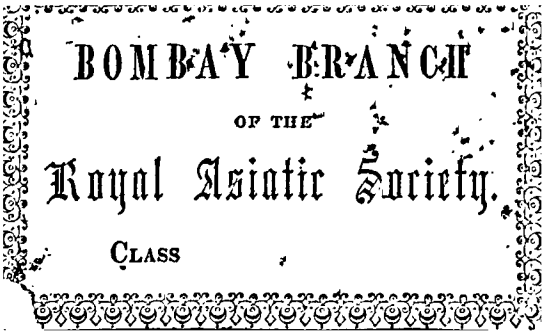

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THE VIRGIN AND CHILD.—*Giovanni Bellini.*

IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY.

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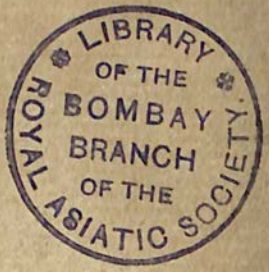

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PREFACE.

THIS book is composed of papers which have appeared in *The Monthly Packet* during 1894 and the present year, and is to a great extent the result of lectures delivered at the Ladies' Department of King's College, and in the National Gallery, from 1890 to 1893.

Part of its ground is the same as that covered by "The Italian Pre-Raphaelites" (published by Messrs. Cassell in 1887), the production of which was prompted by the question of a stranger, who once, in the Early Italian room in the National Gallery, asked me "if there was anything in these pictures to admire except their age."

The object of the present volume is very similar to that of "The Italian Pre-Raphaelites." If not written exclusively for the ignorant stranger, neither is it specially designed for the connoisseur,

the expert, or even for the art-student. For all these there is an ample literature, whether with regard to Art in general or the National Gallery in particular. It has been in no way my wish to encroach on the provinces so well occupied by such learned treatises as those of Dr. J. P. Richter and Signor Frizzoni, or by such storehouses of information and comment as Sir F. Burton's "Official Catalogue," or Mr. E. W. Cooke's admirable Handbook. My principal aim has been to render, in a form at once readable and portable, such a clue to the collection as will help any one who has not made a special study of art-history to take an intelligent interest in the pictures, to put himself in sympathy with the painters and their subjects, and to obtain at the same time a general grasp of the growth of Italian art.

For this last purpose there is, perhaps, no collection so well adapted as our National Gallery. There are many larger, and some in which the genius of particular artists is better displayed, but there is none superior to it in quality and comparative completeness. That it should show no gaps is not to be expected, but they are few; that it can give no appreciable impression of the grandeur to which painting attained in those

mighty frescoes which still glorify the walls on which they were painted, is inevitable: but yet it presents, in almost unbroken sequence, fine and characteristic examples of nearly all the great Italian painters;—contains some works which are unique, others which are the acknowledged masterpieces of their authors, and many, even by the greatest, which are of a quality unsurpassed.

C. M.

October 25, 1895.

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IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY.

CHAPTER I.

THE SPELL OF THE CHURCH.

ON the top of the grand marble staircase before the entrance of the first gallery, there is a small chamber called the North Vestibule. It is hung about with pictures and fragments of pictures, which form a collection somewhat strange and heterogeneous, more striking perhaps than beautiful at first sight. On the right is the earliest Italian picture in the Gallery, a stiff and hideous Madonna and Child, by Margaritone, with scenes from the lives of the Saints; on the left, a fragment of a huge fresco, by Spinello, which, when it was complete, represented the fall of Lucifer and the rebel angels. Half of S. Michael and some of his angels are here, but the rest, except a part of Lucifer, is destroyed. Near it are a

number of heads, portraits evidently, swarthy in complexion, with extremely large eyes, generally drawn, as Rossetti drew them, so as to show some portion of the white below the pupil. They are of a strange, half-oriental, full-blooded type, these people, a mixed race apparently; one, the strong modelling of whose face, inlaid as it were with streaks and clots of pigment, like a mosaic or a late Rembrandt, reminds one of a Roman soldier; the hair of others is close, wiry, almost woolly. They are dressed in "classical" costume, peplums and tunics, and the favourite colour of the ladies is a reddish violet (perhaps the famous "Tyrian" purple), which you will not find elsewhere in the National Gallery. Some of them wear earrings of strange and elaborate fashion; one (in the centre) has a gold snake bracelet on her arm, and suggests Egypt and Cleopatra. If we look closely we shall find that there is something strange also about the method of painting. In all, except the lady with the snake bracelet, the surface is ridgy, and the high lights lumpy, not like the usual lumpiness of paint left by a loaded brush, but more like the guttering of a candle. Notwithstanding, however, the unfamiliar appearance of these portraits in type, in costume, and

in execution, all of which speak of a remote forgotten people, there is yet a strange modernness about them, a sense of life and freedom, which is in marked contrast to the faces we see in Italian pictures of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. These lively persons, so full of character, seem out of place in company with the expressionless Madonna of Margaritone di Magnano and the angels of Spinello Aretino. They would be more at home in the Royal Academy, or even the New English Art Club.

The reason is, doubtless, that they are real portraits of men and women, who were "modern" enough once, though that was seventeen centuries ago, in a Greco-Roman colony at Hawara in the Fayoum. There is a gulf of more than a thousand years between them and the picture by Margaritone (who was born at Arezzo in 1216); they are earlier by twelve hundred years than the fresco of Spinello; and the earliest portraits we possess of the Italian School, those supposed to represent Carlo and Galeazzo Malatesta in Uccello's "Battle of S. Egidio" (No. 583), were not painted till about another century had elapsed.

These pictures from the cemetery at Hawara are of extreme interest for their own sakes, as

relics of an ancient civilisation which existed in a Greco-Roman colony in Egypt, seventeen centuries ago, and as a faithful and vivid record of the physical peculiarities, the costumes, and the ornaments of the mixed race which inhabited it. They are interesting also, technically, as examples of that method of encaustic painting (in hot wax) which flourished under the Greeks and Roman, and has not flourished since; and in one instance (the lady with the bracelet) of the existence, at that time and place, of a method of painting in tempera on cloth. Nor are they less interesting because they were found not in houses or the ruins of houses, but buried in a cemetery; not employed to please the eyes of the living, but for the reverent treatment of the dead. The inhabitants of the colony adopted the Egyptian method of embalming, but modified the appearance of the mummy by substituting a portrait for the *papier-maché* mask, which for some time previously had been used to represent the features of the deceased. The thin boards on which the portraits were painted have in some instances cracked down the middle in the process of flattening them after their removal from the mummy cases.

Although no portraits were found by Mr. Petrie

except on the mummies, it is difficult to believe that the art of portrait painting flourished only for funeral purposes. These lively images seem to speak for themselves, and to tell us that they were taken when their models were alive and in full health, and not by any painter-undertaker from the corpse. Perhaps they had once hung on the walls of houses, perhaps they were copies of existing portraits, specially made for the mummy. However this may be, they are palpable evidence that portrait painting was in full vigour in this outpost of Roman civilisation in the second century.

Perhaps the most striking impression conveyed to our minds as we stand in the North Vestibule of the National Gallery, and compare the portraits from the cemetery of Hawara in the Fayoum, and the fresco painted by Spinello for the Company of S. Angelo on the altar wall of the Church of S. Maria degli Angeli at Arezzo, is this. In the second century, painters painted portraits; in the fourteenth, angels and devils. They painted also divine personages, saints, patriarchs, the whole *dramatis personæ* of the Bible and the legends of the Church, but not portraits. In the second century, as in the nineteenth, they painted the

men and women they saw around them; in the fourteenth they painted only persons they had never seen at all. And this impression, notwithstanding a few exceptions, is generally and substantially a true one.

Surely there is no more natural use of painting, than to preserve for us the living semblance of our friends when they are separated from us by distance or death, and, surely also, a condition of society in which the kindly art of painting, having once exercised, exercises no longer this most human function, must be a strange and strained condition, not to be arrived at but by long and violent convulsions of the social fabric. The decline and fall of the Roman Empire, the destruction of the old civilisation, the centuries of anarchy which prevailed in Italy, the whole period called the Dark Ages (dark indeed as regards painting), all this seems to yawn like a gulf between these Egyptian portraits and Spinello's angels. When society again emerged from the ruins, the arts emerged also—architecture, sculpture, literature, and last of all, the weak, emaciated form of painting; but she was no longer the beautiful, joyful being that the ancients knew, the fair, beloved comrade of humanity, but the humble slave of

the Church, whose duty was not to gladden the heart of man in this world, but only to teach him what was good for his soul in the next. Though the frescoes of Spinello afford a forcible contrast between the different spirits in which painters worked, before and after the great convulsion of the old world, they do not show to what a low ebb painting in Italy had sunk before its revival under Cimabue, Duccio, and Giotto. Its new life had waxed strong before any painter could put so much majesty and energy into his work as Spinello has put into his S. Michael. He had evidently felt both the impulses of the Renaissance —the impulse of Nature emanating from the world around him, and the impulse of Art from the models of ancient sculpture. He must have tasted the beauty of "classical" form before he could have drawn that head and set it on its shoulders as he has done; he must have looked at the life around him ere he drew that white-robed monk in the band of ornament. In order to realise to how great an extent life had been crushed out of pictorial art, we must turn to the picture by Margaritone. Despite its ugliness, we are fortunate in possessing the "most important and characteristic" of the few paintings by this master which

are still in existence. Like all painters of Italy of the thirteenth century, he painted in the Byzantine manner, for there was no other manner. For centuries before his birth the Byzantine School of painting had been supreme in Italy.

The only art patron was the Church, and though the Greek (or Eastern) Church had been separated from the Roman (or Western) Church for centuries, the only artists in painting or mosaic were still Greeks or the pupils of Greeks, and they all painted or designed without any reference to Nature, copying slavishly the models which were fixed by the Greek Church. Whether their pictures represented scenes from the sacred writings, from the legends of the Church, or the lives of the Saints, they were designed and painted according to fixed rules, so that at the time of Margaritone, not only the subjects, but the attitudes, the composition, the types of the faces, the folds of the draperies, even the colours and the method of laying them on, were purely traditional. The result upon what was the nearest approach to native painting in Tuscany, we see before us in this "masterpiece" of Margaritone, where, as if drawn on a slate by a school-boy, several scenes from the lives of the Saints are arranged on either side of a central

picture of the Virgin enthroned with the Child seated on her lap (No. 564). It is evident that the painter was little more than a mechanic. There is some decorative sense shown in the arrangement of the few colours employed, the general effect of which reminds one somewhat of an Etruscan vase, some directness in telling the different stories, some ingenuity in composition; but whatever merit there may be in the work, little if any of it is due to Margaritone, who, incapable as a draftsman and feeble as a painter, has simply copied the inventions of others in a perfunctory and unintelligent manner, without apparently any feeling for beauty or delight in his employment.

It must not, however, be supposed that its effect upon those for whom it was painted was anything like its effect upon us. It was probably a very uncritical band of spectators who formed the congregation at the Church of S. Margherita at Arezzo, nearly all of whom, whether dwellers in the town or peasants from the country around, could not read, and knew as little about art as about literature. To them the first appearance of this picture over the altar was no doubt a striking and memorable event. They probably thought it not only beautiful, but wonderfully like Nature.

Was not Margaritone reputed as one of the greatest painters of the day? Was he not employed by the Pope himself? Was he not an architect also, entrusted by the Bishop of Arezzo to superintend the works at his palace? But even if they did not admire it as a work of art—and it is really very difficult to suppose that they did—we may be sure that it interested them and impressed them greatly. That strange, stern, awful Madonna with her staring eyes, long nose, and spider-like fingers, was accepted by them as a true image of the Queen of Heaven. In her presence they stood awed and hushed as in the presence of the Divine, while the other little pictures from the lives of the Saints inspired more familiar sentiments—were, indeed, "as good as a play," reminding them perhaps of those "miracle" plays which they had seen performed by the monks.

Let us imagine for a moment what a group of peasants may possibly have thought and said as they stood round this wonderful work for the first time. "Ah, there is the great Mother of God; how pure, how passionless, how majestic, with the God-child on her arm! Look at her long thin hand and delicate fingers, how different from these coarse, thick hands of ours. '*Ave Maria beatissima,*

ora pro nobis.' Who's that in the cauldron? What, don't you know, it's the blessed Baptist. No, no, it is the other S. John. It is he who was boiled in oil, and it did not hurt him a bit. Any one can tell S. Catherine, bless her, with her poor head cut off, and her body borne away by angels to Mount Sinai. There is good S. Nicholas, making them throw the cursed oil overboard. Here he is again, releasing the prisoners, and there's S. Benedict, rolling in thorns, and here is our own S. Margaret. That's the best of all. See how the Dragon spits her out again. She does not agree with him, that's clear. Ha! ha!" In some such fashion they probably prayed, and talked, and laughed, too, at least at the pictures outside the charmed aureola, the symbol of Heaven, where the virgin sat enthroned with her Child.

In this picture by Margaritone, and others like them, the degradation of art through the long centuries of anarchy which preceded the Revival, may be said to have reached its lowest point; but it must not be taken as representing the best painting that was produced in Italy at the time. It is far inferior to the best Byzantine work,* and

* Most nearly represented in this Gallery by Emmanuel's picture (No. 594), referred to on pp. 55, 56.

is thought by Dr. Richter to differ from it so much, that he does not hesitate to say that the arrangement of the composition, every detail of it, and even the execution, betray a class of workmanship which stands independent of traditions, and which is the direct offspring of the naïve but barbarous taste prevalent in Italy previous to the Renaissance. Even in the artist's lifetime this Renaissance had commenced, and when Margaritone died in 1293, at the good old age of seventy-seven, his style had been quite superseded by that of Cimabue and his clever young pupil Giotto.

It was in Tuscany in the thirteenth century that life again began to animate painting in Italy. It was in the city of Florence, the centre of intellectual and commercial activity, that it first showed itself. The re-awakening of the eyes of men to the beauty of Nature and the beauty of the few unburied relics of ancient art, had no doubt being going on elsewhere; and it was not only in Florence that the old lifeless art of Byzantium, repeated a thousand times by unintelligent hands, had ceased to satisfy the requickened spirit of man. But, nevertheless, it was in Florence, the old home of the Etruscans, that

the long-suppressed art-sense of the people again burst into a timid flame. One, and not the least, of the thousand discoveries made by their newly opened eyes was that such a Virgin as that of Margaritone was not like the virgins they saw around them, that she was in fact an ugly, hard-featured doll; and a longing grew for something more tender and human and beautiful, before which they could kneel and say their prayers. Whether this longing ever formed itself into words we do not know, but we do know that it showed itself very distinctly when Cimabue, for the first time in the history of the world, painted a Mother of God who bore some living semblance to a mother of men. This famous colossal Madonna of Cimabue is still in the chapel for which it was painted—the Rucellai Chapel, in the Church of Santa Maria Novella at Florence; and we read in Vasari that it was carried in solemn procession from the house of the painter to the church, with the sound of trumpets and other festal demonstrations. Some years later, though probably not many, a similar scene of rejoicing was to be seen in another Tuscan town, then the rival of Florence in art as in other matters—the town of Siena, where Duccio's great altar-piece for the Cathedral was, like Cimabue's

Virgin, carried to its destination in triumph through the streets. The central picture of this was also of the Madonna; but the rest of the huge plank on which it was painted was covered with other subjects, something in the same way as our Margaritone, but it was painted upon both sides and much more beautifully. The greater part of it is still in the Cathedral at Siena, but the plank has been split, the pictures from the life of our Lord have been separated from each other, and some have been dispersed.

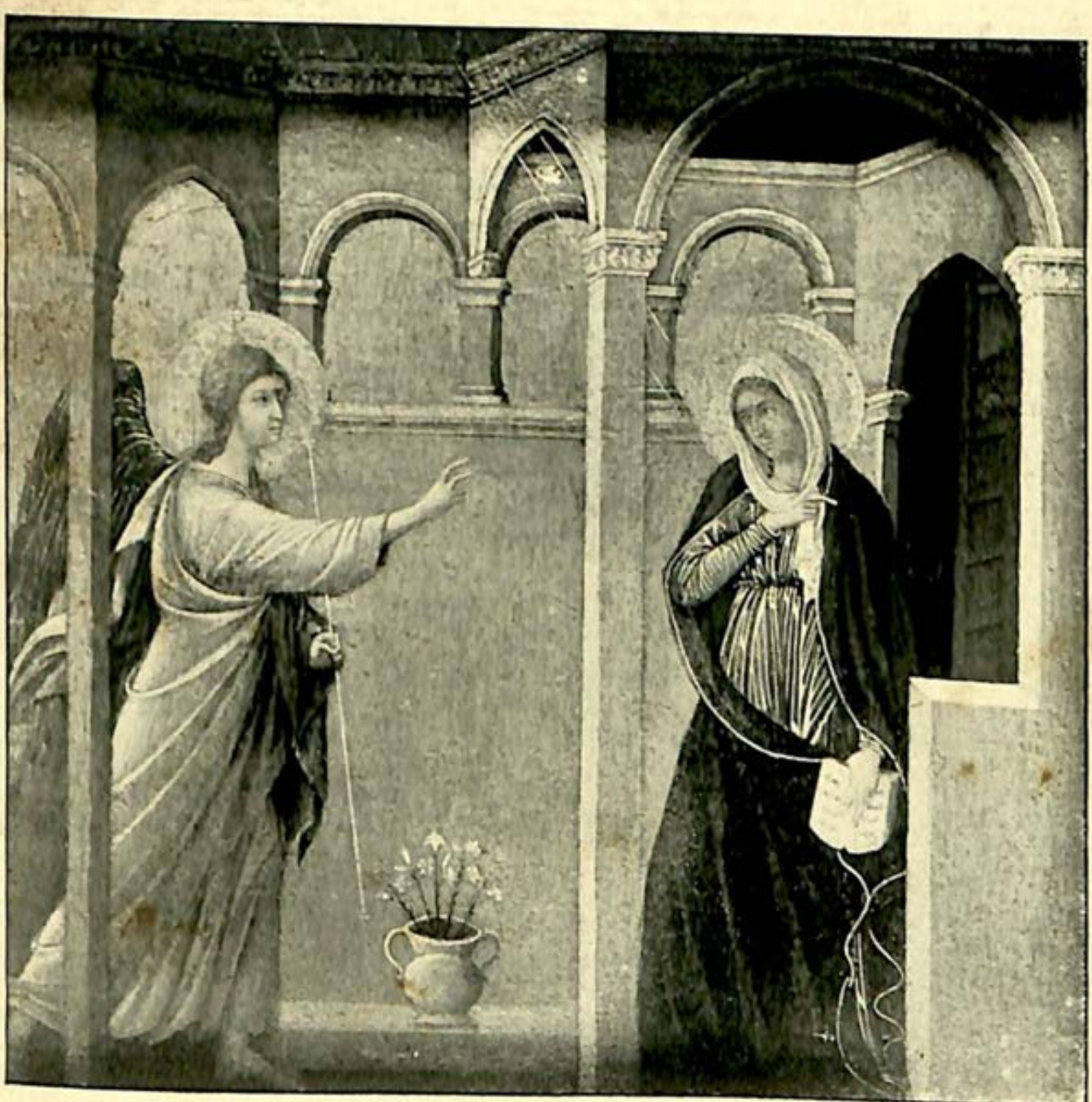
Of the great movement in art of which these pictures seem like standards carried aloft, our National Gallery, indeed any National Gallery, even the Uffizzi, can give but the faintest impressions. It can only be studied in the frescoes on the walls of the churches of Italy to which they are attached. Yet we are fortunate to possess works by both Cimabue and Duccio which may help us to realise the impression made by their famous masterpieces. Our picture by Cimabue, "The Madonna and Child enthroned: Angels adoring" (No. 565), though perhaps not so fine, is very like the more famous one at Florence, in which city it also remained till the close of the last century, attached to a pilaster in the choir

of Santa Croce. By Duccio we have four genuine and well preserved examples, one of which represents the Virgin and Child, while the others recall the numerous scenes from the life of our Lord, which formed part of the great altar-piece at Siena.

We have therefore three pictures of the Madonna and Child of the thirteenth century which are very interesting for purposes of comparison, if for no other purpose. Those by Cimabue and Duccio show the influence of the fresh running stream of humanity—a tender and true, if a timid return to Nature. The Virgin of Cimabue is still awful, but it is gentle; the Child on her knee, with its well-rounded head and carefully drawn feet, shows an effort towards truth; the angels, with their sweet faces and gently flowing raiment, tell of an artist who seeks for beauty of form as well as of feeling. In the Duccio we have still more tenderness, and a greater sense of grace; the refined oval face of the Virgin is inclined towards her Child with motherly love, the silhouette of her supple figure is broken into gentle curves. These pictures are also more characteristic than the Margaritone of the best traditional painting, from which they were taking a new departure, for except for the

evidence of a return to Nature as a model, and their touches of human feeling, they are quite Byzantine in method and manner, as all the most accomplished of Italian paintings at that time were. Clinging more closely to Byzantine traditions, than any other of the works of Duccio in the Gallery, is the panel of "The Transfiguration" (No. 1330), with the folds of the drapery indicated by gold lines. The elements of this ancient design, like those of nearly all the Byzantine conceptions of scenes of sacred history, were never wholly departed from; they remain still quite recognisable in the Transfiguration of Raphael. The originality of Duccio is more plainly seen in the fresh and gracious spirit of "The Annunciation" (No. 1139), the expressive gesture of the blind man restored to sight (No. 1140), and the bold introduction of a background of modern buildings in the latter picture.

Duccio is supposed to have been born about 1260, that is about twenty years after Cimabue, and about six before Giotto, and his position to the School of Siena is much the same as that of Cimabue and Giotto combined. There is no reason to suppose that he studied in Florence, or was influenced by Cimabue. His feeling is



THE ANNUNCIATION.—*Duccio.*

quite distinct, his pure, sweet, transparent colouring is his own, his type of beauty more graceful and more "classical," and he loved more gentle curves, more oval faces and longer limbs. In these things, he followed his own temperament, and by so doing he determined the characteristics of the Sienese School, which stands in somewhat the same relation to that of Florence as a woman to a man. These characteristics are shown in the National Gallery by several well-preserved pictures of the fourteenth century; by the two vigorous and carefully executed panels by Ugolino da Siena (Nos. 1188 and 1189); the Crucifix by Segna di Buonaventura (a pupil of Duccio) (No. 567), which is interesting also as an example of the earliest form in which movable pictures were introduced into churches; the noble fragment of a fresco by the great Ambrogio Lorenzetti (No. 1147); a curious little panel ascribed to his brother Pietro (No. 1113); and one or two others. No doubt Duccio had a fruitful influence on the school of his own town, but with all his skill and freshness, his sense of refined beauty, his command of sentiment and dramatic invention, he had not the masculine vigour, the inexhaustible readiness of invention, or the potent personality which were

needed to regenerate the art of Italy. These qualities were found in Cimabue's young pupil, Giotto.

It is an interesting coincidence that in the reputed year of Giotto's birth, 1266, Florence made a decided advance towards independence and self-government. It was in that year that the Ghibelline (Imperial and aristocratic) supremacy was destroyed by the defeat of Manfred, King of Sicily, at Benevento, and the Guelfs (Papal and democratic) came into full power. It was in that year also that an important change was made in the constitution of Florence, by which the Government was vested in a Council, composed of representatives of the various "arts" or guilds. Comparatively free from attacks from outside, with a strong commercial Government, willing and able to keep in subjection the turbulent nobles within, there was peace enough in Florence during Giotto's boyhood for the development of the arts, and for the building of churches, many of whose bare walls were afterwards to be decorated by his own hand. He was born in a farmhouse at Colle, in the commune of Vespignano, near Florence. According to Leonardo da Vinci, he "drew on the rocks the movement of the goats of which he was the keeper." According to tradition, he was ten

years old when Cimabue found him so employed, and took him to Florence. The story is disputed now, but there seems no doubt that his first instruction was under Cimabue at Florence, though the first trace of his hand is in the Church of S. Francesco at Assisi, where he worked with his master during his youth and early manhood. His fame spread so far that his services were soon in request in various parts of Italy. Between 1298 and 1300 he was at Rome working for Pope Boniface; a few years afterwards at Padua he was executing his wonderful works in the Arena Chapel, under the patronage of Enrico Scrogveno; in 1329 he went to Naples at the special invitation of King Robert. He painted there and at Gaeta, at Rimini and Bologna, at Ferrara and Ravenna, and according to Vasari, at Arezzo, Lucca, and Avignon also. If he did not work at this last place, we know that at the time of his death he was under commission of Pope Benedict XII. to decorate the papal palace there. Thus in his busy life he traversed almost all the length and breadth of Italy, sowing the seeds of the new art wherever he went, breathing life into all the old Byzantine forms and compositions, and inventing new ones himself with exhaustless energy and imagination,

when, as in the case of the life of S. Francis, he had no models to follow. In the treatment of Scripture history, in allegory, in portrait, in animal painting—in every class of subject indeed, except perhaps landscape—he infused a vitality which lasts to the present time. But for his genius the whole aspect of our National Gallery (if we had one at all) would be very different; yet of this, perhaps the most potent master of design who ever lived, we have not even a brushmark.

We may, however, well be thankful for what we have got, and that is a fairly complete set of altar-pieces dating from his own time to that of Fra Angelico, during which period, which corresponds roughly with the whole of the fourteenth century, his genius had an almost uninterrupted influence over Italian painting. None of our examples of the Giotteschi were executed during the life of the master, the earliest of them dating some fourteen or fifteen years after his death. This is the fragment of a fresco called "Two Apostles" (No. 276), which was once thought to be by Giotto himself, or at least executed after his design. Its appearance gave support to the supposition, for fragmentary as it is, it seems to breathe the very spirit of the master, in the solemn sorrow of the

bended heads and the clasp of the agonised hands; but its history is too well known for us any longer to keep up the pleasant delusion. It once formed part of a fresco representing the burial of S. John the Baptist in the Church of S. Maria del Carmine in Florence, which was burnt in 1771. The series to which the fresco belonged was executed in 1350, or after the death of Giotto, and we can now only console ourselves by thinking that they may be the work of Taddeo Gaddi, his pupil, or of Agnolo, Taddeo's son. In some of the other pictures we have what are little else but copies of well-known works by Giotto. One of these is the "Coronation of the Virgin" (No. 568), which should be compared with the some subject as treated by Orcagna (No. 569). It was of course a very favourite subject, often repeated with but slight variations in the details, such as the shape of the bottles or vases in the angel's hands, and the ornaments of the draperies. The composition of No. 568 is very similar to the centre compartment of Giotto's altar-piece at Santa Croce, and the profiles of the angels with their prominent upper lips are particularly Giottesque.

Another instance in which the design of Giotto

is clearly seen is in the *predella* of the large altar-piece of the School of Taddeo Gaddi (No. 579), the main panel of which is painted with "The Baptism of Christ in the River Jordan," where the representation of the banquet, at which the head of John the Baptist is brought in to Herod, with the side pictures of the decollation of the saint, and the presentation of the head to Herodias by her daughter, forms a small and but slightly altered version of a famous fresco, by Giotto, in the Peruzzi Chapel in Santa Croce. Except, indeed, as echoes of Giotto, there is little interest attaching to this picture, or to the two panels of saints, ascribed also to the School of Taddeo Gaddi (Nos. 215 and 216). There is much more originality and vigour in the large altar-piece by Landini or Jacopo di Casentino, a pupil of Taddeo Gaddi (Nos. 580 and 580A). Though the main picture is coarse and unattractive, there is spirit in the scenes in the *predella.* The saints in the pilasters are carefully painted, and the figure of the Virgin in one of the terminal panels (No. 580A) is graceful, and of a fresh type. Of much greater importance than these is the great altar-piece by Orcagna, with its nine attendant pictures, which was originally painted for the Church of San Pietro

Maggiore in Florence (Nos. 569–579). The work cannot indeed be said to bear much trace of the genius of the man who painted the "Last Judgment" and the "Paradise" on the walls of the Strozzi Chapel in S. Maria Novella—still less of the sculptor of the exquisite tabernacle in Or San Michele. Some of his finer feeling and fresher inspiration may yet be shown in the gentle and graceful figures of the angels playing and singing below the throne; but it is otherwise chiefly admirable as a grandiose specimen of church decoration of the period. The nine smaller pictures are chiefly valuable from a historical point of view, as the completest series we possess of scenes from the life of our Lord, treated in accordance with ancient traditions.

If we compare the Nativity with the same subject as treated by Margaritone, we shall find, however, one striking addition. In the earlier picture the stable is represented by a bare cave in the rock, but here, though the cave remains, a wooden portico or shed has been added to shelter the Virgin and her Child. Soon the cave disappeared altogether—we do not see it again in any picture in the National Gallery except in Botticelli's "Nativity of the Saviour" (No. 1034).

Another very common conception in archaic Christian art is also preserved in this series of pictures—the angels with bodies, but no legs, their figures being terminated by a wisp of drapery.

The whole series is full of interest, but the interest consists rather in the preservation of old traditions which were gradually disappearing, than in any fresh life or vigour in the treatment of the subjects. In this respect, as in others, this great, imposing, but on the whole conventional and perfunctory altar decoration, which proceeded from the art factory of Orcagna, is a great contrast to the modest little triptych, by Justus of Padua (No. 701), which hangs beside it, and is filled, from corner to corner, with the very passion of invention. This is dated 1367, and is by far the most satisfactory example we possess of the art of a follower of Giotto. All the pictures in the triptych are full of life and beauty, of spirited drawing and charming colour. The scenes are all old and oft repeated, and the artist has departed little from their customary treatment, but he has inspired them with new life. As I have said elsewhere, "The Virgin is of a fresh type, pretty and noble also. Amongst the saints in the centre picture, that of S. Paul (on the extreme right) is

distinguished by its natural bearing. In the panel representing the birth of our Lord, may be noticed the spirit of alertness in the attendant waiting to wash the Child, and the statuesque design of S. Joseph; but the most beautiful figure of all is that of S. John, at the foot of the Cross, with its fine expression of grief and beautifully designed drapery."

Now if we look at the well-preserved and very Giottesque "Descent of the Holy Spirit" (No. 1437) by Barnaba da Modena, one of our latest acquisitions, we shall have seen nearly all the examples we possess of the artists of the fourteenth century and the School of Giotto. On the whole the result is dispiriting. The paths which the great master opened towards a fresher study of Nature, a wider view of human sentiment and action, were almost abandoned by his followers; they copied him, much as his predecessors had copied the Byzantines, and his art became almost as dead a convention as theirs. The followers were perhaps too feeble, or the spell of the Church too strong.

CHAPTER II.

THE CALL OF SPRING.

As you enter Room No. 2, on the wall in front of you hang two pictures. One is small and long, the other large and square. The lower, "Christ" (No. 663), by Fra Angelico, is a *predella* without its altar-piece; the upper, "The Virgin and Child Enthroned" (No. 283), by Benozzo Gozzoli, an altar-piece without its *predella*. The altar-piece of the former is still, though sadly damaged, in the church of S. Domenico at Fiesole, where its painter, Fra Giovanni da Fiesole, or (as we call him) Fra Angelico (1387–1455), lived for many years. The *predella* of the latter, which was painted by Fra Angelico's pupil, Benozzo Gozzoli (1420–1498), has disappeared. Though we cannot fix with accuracy the dates of the two pictures, it is most probable that Fra Angelico's was painted between 1418 and 1436, for in the latter year he moved with his Order from Fiesole into the new

convent of San Marco in Florence. At that time Gozzoli was a youth of sixteen, and if we needed any further proof that his own work was executed subsequently, we should find it in the recorded fact that he was bound by the terms of his contract to make his Virgin similar in "mode, form, and ornaments," to the Virgin by Fra Angelico over the high altar at San Marco.

They were master and pupil, and both spent their lives mainly in painting religious pictures; but no two artists could be much more dissimilar in spirit. Though Fra Angelico lived through more than half the fifteenth century, his art belongs rather to that of the fourteenth, so completely spiritual was it, so devoted to the Church. Absorbed in his heavenly visions, and leaving one cloister only for another, he had little interest in the world around him, and did not wish to paint it. His only desire was to embody the most pure and spiritual ideas in those lovely forms with which his imagination was inspired, as he believed, by God Himself. His art, in a word, was wholly subjective and ideal, whereas his pupil was one of the most realistic artists of his day, enjoying to the full the new-found beauty of the natural world, thoroughly interested in the characters and pursuits

of his fellow-men, and seeking amongst them for the models and motives of his art. It is, however, rather the resemblance of the pupil to his master than the difference between them that is most apparent in these two pictures. The scale of colour especially, with its gay masses of red and blue and gold, is almost identical. The palette of both is that of the illuminator. Though no existing illuminations can be ascribed with certainty to the hand of Fra Angelico, all his paintings, and none more than this lovely *predella*, bear out the tradition that he received his first training in art from a miniaturist. He was probably an accomplished illuminator when, a young man just about of age, he took the cowl at Fiesole and changed his baptismal name of Guido for that of Giovanni in the Order of S. Dominic.

Fra Angelico was born in 1387 at Vecchio in the Mugello, a village not far from that Colle where Giotto himself first saw the light some hundred and twenty years before. The extraordinary influence of that great initiator had meanwhile gradually dwindled. No man had arisen to pursue his bold efforts in the direction of naturalism. Even the new spirit which he had infused into religious art was dying out, when suddenly

GROUP OF ANGELS.—*Fra Angelico.*

Angelico came and poured such a stream of enthusiasm and imagination into the sacred lamp, as made it burn with a pure and heavenly radiance never seen before nor since.

There are few works by Fra Angelico which could be wisely exchanged for our "Christ with the Banner of the Redemption" (No. 663). We might have a larger, or what is called a more "important," example of the master, but we could scarcely find one more thoroughly characteristic of the truly angelic Angelico. Lord Lindsay speaks of the Holy Virgins of Fra Angelico as "the visible incarnations of the spirit of holiness," and this description might be applied not only to the exquisite Virgin on the right of Christ but to the whole picture. We have many fine examples of devotional expression in the National Gallery, we have the rapture of Perugino, the ecstasy of Botticelli, but nowhere else shall we find a holy joy so pure, so innocent, so unconscious of self, as in this divine vision of the Second Advent.

In the centre panel we see Christ (whose figure is unfortunately the least satisfactory of all) standing with the Banner of the Resurrection in His left hand, in the midst of the angelic host, relieved upon a background of plain gold. It is in the

choir of angels, with their sweet faces and gently flowing robes, some singing, others blowing trumpets, or playing upon other musical instruments, and all, if not moving, at least animated with sacred joy, that we see in its essence the spirit of the master. On the right of Christ, in the top line of the next panel, is the Virgin, followed by the Apostles; on the left, Adam and the patriarchs. The rest of these panels are filled with other holy personages—Prophets and Saints too numerous to mention, and these are again flanked by two compartments, containing the "Beati" of the Order of the Dominicans, in whose reverend ranks the painter himself was afterwards to be enrolled. Though the very noble type which he has chosen for the patriarchs is more or less repeated, there is on the whole a wonderful variety in these two hundred and sixty-six figures, with their faces set in adoration towards the Saviour, and, notwithstanding the formal arrangement and the few simple colours employed, the whole effect charms us by its decorative beauty, as well as by the spirit with which it is inspired.

For Fra Angelico was not only a saint but an artist, or in other words, one who perfectly understood how to employ the means at his disposal to

produce the desired effect. Like all other followers of Giotto, of whom he was the last (and, with the the possible exception of Orcagna, also the greatest), his chief aims were devotional expression and decorative effect. Expression, chiefly conveyed by the face, but aided by gentle and appropriate pose and gesture; decorative effect, produced principally by the arrangement of masses of simple colours and a lavish use of gold. If we compare the *predella* with Orcagna's "Coronation of the Virgin," we shall find the artistic ideals very much the same. In both we have the centre occupied by the object of adoration, surrounded by a choir of angels, some of whom are making heavenly music; and outside, an adoring circle of saints, in rows, with their faces turned towards the central glory, making altogether a highly impressive spectacle, the decorative effect of which is greatly heightened by the ordered ranks of halos. In the Orcagna the effect of these is greater, for the heads of the saints are not on the same level, but rise towards the centre in golden arches from each side, an arrangement impossible in the long narrow *predella* of Fra Angelico. The chief difference between the two works is this, that Fra Angelico has

carried expression to a perfection which was impossible to Orcagna. To do this the most necessary improvement technically was in drawing the human face, especially the eyes. Though Fra Angelico did not master it perfectly, and though the eyes of his angels do not always look quite straight, and their lids retain somewhat of the buttonhole type of Giotto, the defects are not sufficient to impair the exquisite beauty of the feeling which penetrates them. Moreover, Fra Angelico could not only draw features with great skill, but he knew how to cast his draperies with a beauty that was almost classic, and to impart to his draped figures a grace and dignity which could scarcely be exceeded. Last and not least, he had a strong perception of physical human beauty, male and female, which was not the less real because such beauty was only valued by him as the symbol of spiritual perfection.

Real, however, as this sense of physical beauty was, his interest in the human organisation was strictly limited to its faculty for expressing beautiful emotions of the soul, and it needed a more profound knowledge of the structure of the human form than he ever cared to acquire to enable him to succeed in his attempt to represent Christ in

Glory by a partially nude figure. Yet this figure of Christ, ill-balanced as it is and weakly drawn, is ethereal, and the failure is in execution rather than conception. In the face he follows the ancient type adopted more or less by Giotto and his followers; we see it in the National Gallery, more especially in the pictures of Orcagna. It seems to have been based on the description supposed to have been sent to the Roman Senate by Publius Lentulus, pro-consul of Judæa. It has the fair, reddish (wine-coloured) hair, straight from the top of the head to the ears, and descending from the ears to the shoulders in shining curls, flowing down the back and divided into two portions. According to another tradition, though His hair was golden, His beard was dark; and we find this type in Landini's picture (No. 580A), and also in Orcagna's "Trinity" (No. 570), in which he has given to the Father the type he usually employed for Christ.

Though Fra Angelico thus adhered to the old traditions and worked more, perhaps, than any other painter under the spell of the Church, he yet lived in times when the strong new wine of naturalism was so infused into all thought and art, that it permeated even into his cloister studio, and affected even his purely spiritual conceptions. He

was the last of the old Supernatural School; art with him was "still religion," in a much more strict sense than with Albert Dürer, but we see even in this *predella* that he studied his fellow-creatures, and that he loved beauty in many forms. In his other little picture* here, "The Adoration of the Magi" (No. 582), we see that his artistic sense was attracted by the picturesque and fantastic in costume, and in some of his works the influence of the neo-classicism or Renaissance of his day has plainly affected his architecture and the style of his figures. Though his spirit belonged to the fourteenth century, he lived in the fifteenth, and his influence was powerful throughout his life, and after it. Even Michael Angelo was not without its sphere. Thus, though he completed the cycle of purely supernatural art, he also led the way to that wonderful fusion of the supernatural and the natural in which Italian art culminated a century later. He was the last disciple of Giotto, the first harbinger of Raphael.

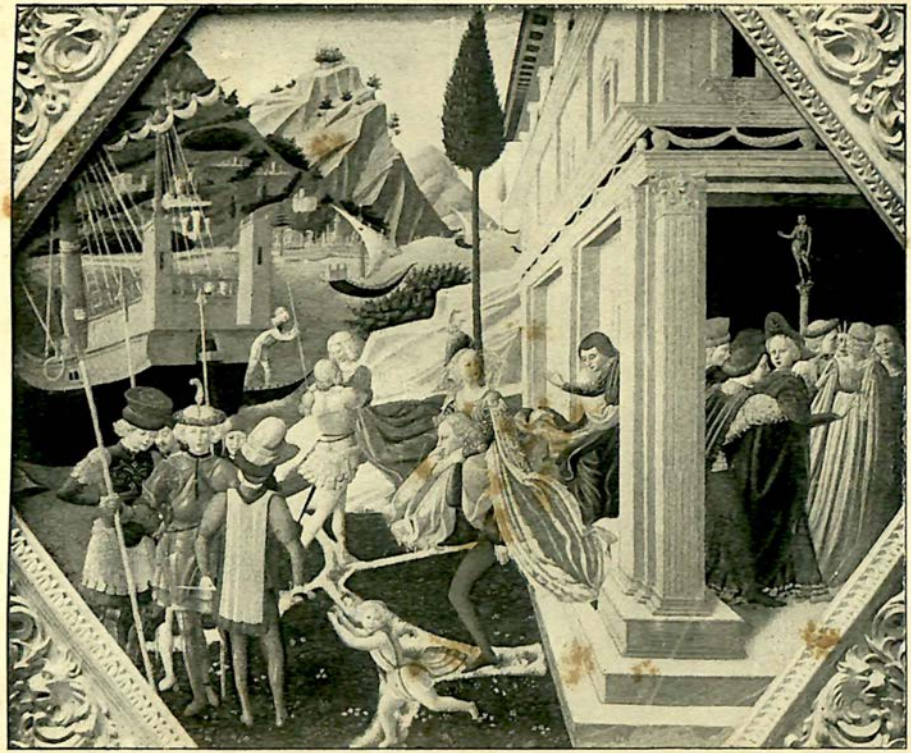
Nevertheless, Fra Angelico was almost an anachronism in his own day, when the revival of classical learning, accompanied as it was with the

* Since this was written a large and weak "Annunciation," ascribed to Fra Angelico, has been added to the collection.

revival of the love of nature and of the free agency of the human mind and senses, began to show a marked influence upon painting. This emancipation of the human intellect, which had been enslaved for centuries, showed itself principally in two ways with regard to painting: in Realism or interest in nature and human society, and in Classicism or love of organised beauty, as seen in the remains of classical art. Though the patronage of art had shifted partly from the Church to the great magnates, especially the great commercial princes like the Medici at Florence, her influence was still paramount, and though secular subjects were not uncommon, the vast majority of paintings executed for patrons, whether clerical or lay, were still religious in subject. It is not, therefore, surprising that among the artists of the fifteenth century, many of whom were monks and all Church painters, we find a distinct cleavage dividing artists whose aim was to break away from all traditions—realists—classicists—in a word, reformers, from artists who clung tenaciously to the old ideals, and whose main aim was still the perfection of devotional expression.

It was to the former class that Benozzo Gozzoli belonged, pupil though he was of Fra Angelico.

Although his special quality may be partly discerned in the altar-piece that hangs above his master's *predella*, in the strongly marked character of the saints, and perhaps more in the carefully studied goldfinches, there was little scope in such a subject for the exercise of his imagination or the display of his individuality. It is different with the little panel opposite, "The Rape of Helen" (No. 591), in which he has depicted with great liveliness and gusto a scene from a classical legend. Possibly, to Fra Angelico, who regarded painting only as a means of edification, its employment on such a subject may have seemed little less than sacrilege, not unlike the use of a chancel for the stabling of horses. Such views can scarcely be said to be extinct even now, and this is the more remarkable as no one has the same feeling with regard to the other arts, such as sculpture or poetry. To a young man like Benozzo, and many others of his day, not monks, nor specially devout in disposition, it must, nevertheless, have been a change which was welcome. To paint the "Virgin enthroned with Saints" over and over again, must have been a little wearisome to men conscious of a fancy to which they could give no scope except by putting S. Jerome's hat in a new place, or



THE RAPE OF HELEN.—*Benozzo Gozzoli.*

introducing a couple of goldfinches. One likes to think of the pleasure with which Gozzoli received his commission one morning, perhaps from Cosimo de' Medici himself, for whom his master was adorning a cell in the Convent of San Marco, recently rebuilt at the great man's expense. Did he know the legend of Helen of Troy, or had he to seek the advice of some scholar like Nicolli or Poggio for the right tradition? He seems, indeed, to have been rather mixed in his ideas on the subject. Did he consult Brunellesco in the construction of his Greek Temple, or Donatello or Ghiberti for the statue inside? Whence came that wonderful landscape with its mountains and cypress trees and strange-shaped ships? From his imagination, or from some old missal or choir-book illumination? At all events, pleasure evidently went to the making of it, for his fancy had full scope. His costumes he adopted frankly from those of his day, adding some features in the way of strange headgear, much like those in Fra Angelico's "Adoration" (in which he possibly had a hand), to give an Eastern colour to the group of boyish heroes on the left; not knowing or considering that the robes in which he was accustomed to drape his angels were much nearer to, were indeed

derived from, the costume of the Greeks. For his ideal of female beauty he seems to have been satisfied with his own taste. One can scarcely imagine a face or figure much less classical than that of the blonde with the *retroussé* nose (presumably Helen herself), who is riding so complacently on the neck of the long-legged Italian in the centre. The figures in the Temple are of a finer type, and the lady in the sweeping robe, with the long sleeves, who turns her back to us, has a simple dignity which reminds one less of Gozzoli's master than of Lippo Lippi or Masaccio, whose frescoes in the Carmine he, in common with all other artists, had doubtless studied. There is nothing so classical or so natural in the picture as the beautiful little bare-legged boy that is running away in the foreground. This little bright panel—so gay, so naïve, so ignorant, and withal so charming—is of importance in the history of art as illustrated in the National Gallery. It is the first in which the artist has given full play to his imagination, and entered the romantic world of classic legend, and, with one exception, the first which is purely secular in subject, and was designed for a "secular" purpose. It probably once formed part of a marriage-chest. The important share

which the landscape has in the composition, and its serious attempt at perspective, are also worthy of note. As an example of the master himself, of the painter of the great panoramic procession of the notables of his day, which, under the title of the "Adoration of the Kings," covers the walls of the chapel in the Medici Palace at Florence, of the designs of the history of S. Agostino at San Gemignano, and of the frescoes in Campo Santo at Pisa, it is of course extremely inadequate, but it suffices to indicate many paths which the young artist was to strike out from the old track which sufficed for his saint-like master.

This track, though not deserted anywhere, was now pursued more diligently and exclusively in parts of Italy, especially Siena and Umbria, which were removed from that seething centre of intellectual activity, the city of Florence. At Foligno and Cortona, where Fra Angelico had worked; at Borgo San Sepolcro, the birthplace of Piero della Francesca; at Perugia, consecrated by the shades of S. Francis, Cimabue, and Giotto, the expression of religious calm and devotional ecstasy, which may be said to have culminated in the lovely ideals of Perugino, remained still the chief motive of artists. At Siena, once the rival

of Florence in art as well as arms, the new ideas prevailed still less. She was cut off by pride and animosity from Florence, and in the middle of the fourteenth century she was reduced to beggary through famine, and three-fourths of her population, including many of her best men and painters, were carried off by the plague. So for a century or more her art remained almost stagnant, and such new outside impulse as it received came rather from Umbria than Florence. Of her artists of this period, the best of whom was Taddeo di Bartolo (1363–1422), we have no example, unless we include the interesting little panel of the "Marriage of the Virgin" (No. 1109), by Niccolò di Buonacorso, who died in 1388. Our next examples of the school are by artists who were born about 1435, and though the "Assumption of the Virgin," by Matteo da Siena (No. 1155), is exquisite in feeling, one has only to compare it with Florentine work of the same period, like that of Botticelli, to see how far Siena has lagged behind, at least in technique. Amongst other points may be observed the inferiority of the landscape, and the absence of a sky, the place of which is still occupied by gold.*

* Another picture by this artist lately added to the Gallery, "S. Sebastian crowned by Angels," has a beautiful landscape.

On the right hand of this lovely picture, with its sweet but stately Madonna, and the group of angels, which for their pure simple joy are almost comparable to those of Fra Angelico, there is a little dark unattractive picture (No. 1138), by Andrea del Castagno (1390–1427), a contemporary of Fra Angelico, but one of the "modern school" of his day. It represents "The Crucifixion," with figures of the Virgin and S. John. Robust and vigorous, but unrefined, this and all other of the pictures that remain by him lack the grace and sentimental charm of Fra Angelico and Matteo da Siena. But the picture is worth some attention nevertheless. The artist has endeavoured at least to increase the resources of his art; he has studied the nude and anatomy, although his forms are so ungainly; he has sought for natural expression of grief, although he has only achieved grimace; and, what is more important at the moment, he has gone to Nature for inspiration. The landscape is the first we possess in the National Gallery, which has evidently been studied in the open air. Monochrome almost,* this view of brown undulating country is an attempt to reproduce just what he has seen; the earth is

* It was probably green enough once.

modulated by Nature and not by his fancy, nor according to a conventional type. Moreover, there is a sky, with a real attempt to treat it as the source of light, to show that the vault of heaven is not flat, and even to depict it under a particular effect of cloudy twilight. The new desire to represent things more in accordance with their actual appearance, which led to the scientific study of anatomy and perspective, and the search after new methods of painting, was strong in Castagno, and though it seems to have added little to the cheerfulness of his work, it inspired him with sufficient earnestness to give it interest. Tradition says that he was one of the first Italian artists to paint in oil, and learnt the secret from Domenico Veneziano. Vasari adds, that having obtained the secret, he murdered Domenico; but this old story, so long current, and still often repeated, has been completely disproved by the discovery that his supposed victim outlived him by about five years.

For the method of employing oil-painting for pictures was still unknown in Italy at the beginning of the fifteenth century. Water-colour for illuminating, fresco for walls, and tempera for movable pictures, were the only methods known.

The discovery of a satisfactory method of painting in oil or varnish was first made in Flanders by one or other of the Van Eycks. While Fra Angelico was still painting his lovely angels in tempera, John Van Eyck (1390?–1440) was painting his "Adoration of the Lamb," and our famous picture of "Arnolfini and his Wife" (No. 186), in his new medium. He was born about the same time as Andrea del Castagno and Domenico Veneziano, whose experiments, whatever they were, had no such satisfactory result. At all events, no painting by either of these artists have come down to us which are certainly painted in oil. Our examples of Domenico (Nos. *766*, *767*, and 1215) are all in fresco, and originally formed part of the decoration of a tabernacle at the Canto de' Carnesecchi at Florence. They were indeed at one time much repainted in oil by other hands, with the intention of repairing the damage sustained by long exposure in the open air; but these misguided retouches have now been removed, and the works restored so far as possible to the state in which they left the master's hand. The only other known work by him is an "Enthroned Madonna and Child with Saints," in the Uffizzi, and there is a doubt whether it is executed in pure

tempera. With the exception of the tradition of his experiments in mediums, and the fact that he decorated the vestibule of the Casa Baglioni at Perugia with five and twenty figures of illustrious men, there is nothing to show that he was inspired by the new ideas, or departed from the beaten track of ecclesiastical art.

A far more potent and energetic reformer, another contemporary of Fra Angelico, was Paolo di Dono, called Uccello (1397–1475), from his love of painting birds. Of all his remaining works, "The Battle of S. Egidio" (No. 583) is probably the finest. It is the earliest work (by an Italian artist) in the National Gallery which contains portraits in the sense in which that term is usually employed. It is the first picture also which endeavours to represent a contemporary event. Such works were still very rare. The introduction of portraits into pictures began indeed with Giotto. Though the portraits in the "Paradise," in the Chapel of the Bargello, are not, as long supposed, by the hand of Giotto, but by one of his pupils, that of Dante is still thought to have been copied from an altar-piece by Giotto, in which he had introduced the likeness of his friend; and the practice of introduciug little figures of donors into

THE BATTLE OF S. EGIDIO.—*Paolo Uccello.*

the altar-pieces they presented to their churches or chapels began very early. The earliest example of this in the National Gallery is probably in the picture by Fiorenzo di Lorenzo (No. 1103), who was born about 1430. Andrea del Castagno was employed to paint the leaders of the Albrizzi and Peruzzi conspiracy on the walls of the Podestà at Florence in 1435, and an equestrian portrait of Niccolò da Tolentino in the Cathedral. In a similar manner the fame of a military commander was celebrated on the walls of the Sala del Consilio at Siena, by Simone Martini, and Sir John Hawkwood, an English soldier in the service of Florence, still rides his horse on the wall of its Duomo. He was painted there by Uccello, the very artist who painted this incident in the struggle at S. Egidio between Carlo Malatesta, Lord of Rimini, and Braccio di Montone, Lord of Perugia, in which Malatesta and his nephew Galeazzo were taken prisoners. They are being marched away under guard of their enemies, for the banner above them is not that of their family. An attempt at rescue is being made apparently, but it does not seem to be a very serious one, as only two of Montone's knights deem it worth while to take part in the repulse. The chief

difficulty in this explanation of the action is that the picture seems to have been painted in honour of the only two figures whose faces are shown, and they or their friends would be scarcely likely to choose the episode of their capture for this purpose. However that may be, it is interesting as an authentic record of an engagement in the year 1416 or thereabouts; of the arms and armour, and the caparisons of the horses in use at that time; nay, even of the horses themselves, for, though they are very wooden constructions, they have evidently been studied and modelled with care, and may be held to show the strong type of horse used to carry the heavily equipped warriors of the day. They look more wooden probably than they did when the picture was fresh, and the rough blocking out was softened by over-paintings which have now disappeared. At all events, the action is spirited and the proportions good, while the black horse on the left is cleverly foreshortened. It will be observed that the artist has not tried to conceal the pride and pleasure which he took in that newly discovered (or half-discovered) science of perspective and foreshortening, which he studied so passionately. How carefully he has placed the broken lances and the fallen knight, so as to show

off his skill to the greatest advantage! How naïvely he has arranged the lines of the roads and hills in the background with the same motive, and introduced diminishing figures at intervals! He has been much less anxious about the natural forms of the land, which might have been drawn from a piece of putty roughly sliced with a knife. His love of nature is better shown in the intricate hedge of rose, pomegranate, and orange trees, against which the principal figures are relieved. It is, however, in the action of the figures, and in the admirable painting of the armour, and the two uncovered heads, that his skill is most pleasantly shown in this very interesting picture.

Uccello stands very much alone in the school. It is thought that he studied under the great painter and medallist of Verona, Vittore Pisano, or Pisanello (1380–1451), a great lover and skilful delineator of animals, of whose very rare easel-pictures the National Gallery now possesses two. Uccello had much in common with Piero della Francesca, an Umbrian painter, who probably received a scientific and artistic training in Florence, where he worked in conjunction with Domenico Veneziano, and learnt from him the secrets of oil-painting. One of the portraits in the

National Gallery, ascribed to Piero, and supposed to represent Contessa Palma of Urbino (No. 758), has a great resemblance in style and handling to the work of Uccello, as will be seen if we compare it with the head of Galeazzo in the Battle of S. Egidio. It is also to be noted as at least an interesting coincidence that the other portrait ascribed to Piero (though it is probably by neither Piero nor Uccello) is said to represent Isotta da Rimini, fourth wife of Sigismondo Malatesta, the nephew of Carlo and cousin of Galeazzo. Both Uccello and Piero della Francesca loved nature and animals and trees and flowers, both tried hard to paint landscapes better than they had ever been painted before, both loved and studied the laws of linear perspective with absorbing interest, and both, but especially Francesca, as can be seen in our "The Nativity of our Lord" (No. 908) and the "Baptism of Christ" (No. 665), tried many new effects of light and colour. We shall have to return to these pictures again; it can only be noted now that the "Nativity" is probably the first Italian oil-picture which we possess, and no little part of the interest, the fascination, it may be said, of this and the "Baptism," consists in the testimony they bear to the artists' sincere and

strenuous efforts after truth. There is scarcely a touch which is not (or was not in those days) the record of a new discovery, made in the earnest desire to express the beauty of Nature and the joy of life, matters which had hitherto been treated as completely outside the sphere of the painter's art. Francesca was a painter of religious subjects, and the spirit in which he painted them was as reverent as that of any of the older painters, but he, too, had felt the call of Spring.

CHAPTER III.

THE SHORE OF ROMANCE.

IN Room No. 1, you will see on the west wall a sad-coloured picture, robbed by time and over-cleaning of all its once-beautiful surface, or may we not say complexion, of paint, and immediately below it another, long and narrow, which still gleams and glows with nearly all its pristine fire, as though it were painted over gold with translucent enamel. The former is Fra Lippo Lippi's "Vision of S. Bernard" (No. 248), and the latter is "The Adoration of the Magi; or, the Wise Men's Offerings" (No. 592), which is ascribed in the catalogue to Filippino Lippi, the son of Lippo, but is thought by many good judges to be by Botticelli, the pupil of Lippo and the master of Filippino. At first sight there is not perhaps much that is common to the two pictures, but if we carefully compare them with those earlier Italian paintings in the Gallery which have been considered in the previous chapters, the works of

the Giotteschi, of Fra Angelico, and even of his pupil Benozzo Gozzoli, we shall be conscious of the presence of a new element of interest of a more familiar and companionable kind, which may be shortly and broadly described as "humanity." It is easy enough to find this element in the picture of "The Adoration," for every figure of the motley groups that follow "the kings" is an individual whose personality is distinctly, sometimes humorously and even whimsically, marked; but there is "character" also in Fra Lippo's picture of S. Bernard's vision. His S. Bernard is no conventional saint, whose traditional features are a mere mask to express a given feeling. He is not only a saint, but a man, and his painter was interested in him personally, and did his best to realise how such a man and none other would look as, lifting his eyes from his desk, he saw the Virgin and her attendant angels between himself and the wall. He has truly made the face the window of the soul, if not for the first time in art, at least for the first time in art as represented in the National Gallery.

If we pass into Room 2 we shall see this human quality in Fra Lippo's art still more fully displayed. Here we have two of the most characteristic and

exquisite works of his earlier period, "The Annunciation" (No. 666) and "S. John the Baptist with six other Saints" (No. 667). It is naturally in the latter that his keen observation of his fellow-men, and his sympathy with their individualities, are the more fully displayed. All these saints are also men, clearly characterised. The heads are, indeed, more or less typical, but they are individual also. They are like portraits, "idealised," as we say, in conformity with the traditions of the particular saints. The features and gestures of some of them, we may assert with confidence (and this we could not do with regard to any of Fra Angelico's saints), were studied from men who were alive in Florence when the picture was painted, probably intimate acquaintances of the painter, if not monks in that Carmelite convent which he entered at an early age. They have all different modes of expressing their attention to the golden words which fall from the mouth of the Baptist. S. Cosmo looks up, S. Damian looks down, the eyes of S. Francis are fixed on S. John, those of S. Lawrence on the ground, or perhaps on the "stigmata" of S. Francis, S. Anthony stretches his right hand towards the speaker, S. Peter Martyr

THE ANNUNCIATION.—*Fra Filippo Lippi.*

holds his up to his ear as if in fear to lose a word. Without undue familiarity there is a sense of society; the feeling as well as the composition is bound in one by a tie of human sympathy. It is a holy "conversation piece," to use a term employed in the eighteenth century to denote a portrait composition in which several persons were grouped together in a social manner.*

The "Annunciation" is conceived in much the same spirit of tender and poetic realism. Robbed of his nimbus and wings, the announcing angel is only a comely, round-headed Florentine boy with closely curling hair, who delivers his message with simple and charming grace, and she, the Virgin who receives it with so sweet and humble a courtesy, might be his sister. But if the types are not very distinguished or the emotion greatly elevated, the whole composition is lovely and harmonious. The gentle bearing of the angel is beautifully echoed by the timid reverence of the Virgin, and the note of delightful wonder which these figures strike is sustained at the same pitch throughout, by the strangeness, the variety, and the beauty of the details. From the exquisite wings of the angel to the richly coloured marbles

* For the use of the term *Santa Conversazione*, see p. 247.

which floor the Virgin's little court, everything in the picture is rare and lovely, and as we stand before it we feel ourselves in an enchanted land, if not in the presence of an awful mystery.

Not the least thing worthy of note in these two priceless pictures is their colour. They have fortunately been well preserved, and show us that Lippo Lippi was the first of the great painter-colourists. No one before had devised schemes of colour so personal to himself, a palette so completely his own; no one had so felt the beauty of "broken" colour, of the lovely modifications of which a pure colour was capable by reduction with white or mixture with other colours, or the endless harmonies which could be produced by weaving them together. Many of the colours he obtained, as for instance his shoaling pinks and dewy blues, were new to painting, and for the prevalent tint of the rich arrangement of reds in the Virgin's chamber, we may almost seek in vain elsewhere in the National Gallery. With the aid of his greys and semitones he enforced his stronger colours, and at the same time made them live together in a harmony which in its combination of softness and lustre has seldom been equalled.

These two pictures once belonged to Cosimo

de' Medici (1389–1464), and remained in the palace which he built at Florence (to which the name of his family has again been restored, after passing for more than a century under that of its last private owners, the Riccardi) till the year 1846. Signs of their former ownership are visible in both pictures. S. John Baptist, the patron saint of Florence, is seated between S. Cosmo and S. Damian, the patron saints of the Medici, and on the plinth, which upholds the Virgin's vase of lilies, is carved the badge of Cosimo, three feathers tied together in a ring. Cosmo and Damian, according to the legend, were brothers famous for their skill in medicine, which they practised, without recompence, for charity and the love of God. Arabs by birth, they dwelt in the town of Algœ in Cilicia, and suffered martyrdom under Diocletian (245-313) and Maximian (286-308). These two "Santi *medici* Arabi" are always represented together, in the habit of physicians, with loose red robes, and generally red caps, as in this picture. The robes are usually trimmed with fur. They occur most frequently in Florentine pictures in the time of Cosimo, but we shall find them on the frame of the Landini (No. 580), and

in the late Greek picture by Emmanuel (No. 594), which, though supposed to have been executed in the seventeenth century, belongs to a stage of art anterior not only to Fra Lippo Lippi but to Giotto.

These pictures of S. John and the Annunciation, though religious (even more, perhaps, because they are religious) in subject, show what a change came over the spirit of the artist, in the fifteenth century. Though by no means casting aside all tradition, he was no longer bound by it, as with swaddling clothes. He no longer looked on the pictures of bygone artists as the only source of art, but turned boldly to nature for his models and his inspiration. He marched out from the cloisters into the world, and enjoyed for the first time its freshness and its wonder. Life was not only new and beautiful to him, but it was full of romance wherever he turned. The long-pent intellect and imagination of mankind poured forth in a stream which turned every object into gold. Before the clear, strong, but unsentimental eyes of a man like Benozzo Gozzoli, the world was a panorama of endless variety, a pageant of inexhaustible interest; to the poetical dreamer like Lippo Lippi it was a perpetual source of sweet vision, a boundless playground of the fancy.

In this age of search and invention, of discovery and rediscovery, when every step was on virgin soil, or on ground unbroken for centuries, the painters were not the least to be envied. For them, unlike the painters of to-day, no glorious array of masterpieces stood like the giants of old across the road, intimidating their enterprise and forestalling their conceptions. Their forerunners had only shown the way into an untrodden country of inexhaustible beauty and romantic interest. For these had been the journey through the desert, led, indeed, by pillars of smoke and fire, but not for them the promised land.

Fra Lippo Lippi, if we may judge from his works, was thoroughly equipped by Nature to enjoy all the good gifts of the earth. Richly dowered as an artist with the sense of colour and of decorative beauty, he had also the temperament of a poet, keenly alive to all that was interesting in human life, sensitive to the different moods of different men, following and noting the subtlest shades of expression which flitted over their faces, especially when they were transfigured with a fine emotion. But he was not a saint for all that. His sympathies with his fellow-creatures extended indeed to their moments of religious

enthusiasm, and there can be little doubt that he had such moments himself, but he was a man of ill-regulated life, and a scandal to the Order to which he belonged. The scandal was, perhaps, not entirely his fault, for, if he had been left to his own free will, it is very unlikely that he would have chosen to become a monk. But he had practically no choice, for his parents being dead, he was consigned, when eight years of age, to the Carmelite Convent of the Carmine at Florence, where he was brought up and educated, and at the age of fourteen or fifteen took the vows. This was in the year 1421, when Masaccio began to paint his famous frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel of the Church of S. Maria del Carmine adjoining the convent. The young monk, who soon showed a greater disposition to paint than to pray, no doubt watched the wonderful young genius, may have received lessons from him, and certainly studied his work with enthusiasm. It is very probable that a warm friendship may have sprung up between the two youths, for, after all, there were but five years between them, although Masaccio was already a master—and the greatest that had appeared since Giotto. In a few years he went away to Rome, and Lippi saw him no

more, for he died there about 1428, at the age of twenty-six or twenty-seven. Three years after this, Lippi was allowed to leave the convent, having in the mean time probably executed some works in the Carmine (now destroyed), which gained him great reputation. According to Vasari, many said that "the soul of Masaccio had flitted into the body of Filippo." Though he left the convent, he was not released from his vows, and, still wearing his monastic habit, went about pursuing his profession as a painter. Also according to Vasari, he met with strange adventures in his wanderings—was seized by Barbary pirates at Ancona, and obtained his release by painting the portrait of his master. Though this story is now discredited, his doings during the years following his exit from the convent are not so fully filled up as to leave no room for romantic conjecture. The first time we hear of him again is in 1434, when he is said to have worked at Padua. The next in 1438, when he was painting for San Spirito in Florence a picture which is now in the Louvre.

At this time his "wanderings" were probably over, as he was in full employment at Florence, though still very poor. There is a letter from him

extant, dated the following year, in which he applies to Pietro de' Medici for bread and wine, "on account" of an unfinished picture, "as he is one of the poorest monks in Florence, and has to provide for six poor nieces, still minors." Down to this time (and later) there is no evidence of those "scandals," which have so much affected poor Lippi's character, and the testimony of his earlier pictures, including those in the National Gallery, which are so pure and reverent in spirit, is strongly in his favour. At all events, it is only fair to him, if we reject the evidence of tradition with regard to his romantic adventures, to give him the benefit of any doubts as to his moral conduct, which are founded on no stronger evidence. Although the times were tolerant in this respect, it is not probable, if he had then been a very notorious evil liver, that Pope Eugenius IV. would in 1442 have appointed him Rector of S. Quirico in Legnaia, especially as he deprived him of this office in 1450 for misconduct. It must, however, be confessed that this misconduct, if proved, was of a nature not easy to forgive, as it consisted of refusing to pay a pupil a sum of forty golden florins, which he owed him, and, what is worse, of forging a receipt for the money.

The proof, however, was his own confession extorted by torture, and he appealed against the sentence. It is one of the inexplicable facts of his history that, though the sentence was confirmed by a brief of Pope Calixtus III., in 1455, in which the painter is accused of "numerous and abominable wickednesses," he reappears in the following year as chaplain of the Convent of S. Margherita at Prato. Here he sadly abused his privileges, for, having persuaded the superintendent of the convent to allow a beautiful nun named Lucrezia Buti to give him sittings for a picture of the Virgin, he made use of the opportunity to engage her affections, and contrived, during a religious ceremony, to carry her off to his lodgings. It was some years before the scandal was allayed, but at last the Pope, partly, no doubt, through the intervention of the Medici, absolved both nun and friar from their vows, and recognised their marriage.

Whatever errors Fra Lippo may have committed in his life, they, at this distance of time, appear trivial in comparison with the virtue of his work. With him, it may be truly said, that the evil perishes and the good remains. He may have been a scandal to his Order and a trouble

to his friends, but he has been a benefactor to the world. Even the greatest of his enormities, his elopement with Lucrezia, had no worse result for us who live now than the birth of Filippino Lippi, the exquisite painter, who inherited his father's genius, without, so far as we know, his weaknesses of character, and dowered the world with works of imperishable beauty, If Lippo was not always just to his pupils in pecuniary matters, he at least taught them well, for he was one of those comparatively few good painters who have also been good masters. Of the small group of artists who belong to what may be called the Lippi school, the youngest was Francesco Peselino (1422-1457), the grandson of Pesello (1367-1446), who in his short life of thirty-five years achieved a great reputation. Of his works, which are rare, the masterpiece is in the National Gallery —"A Trinità" (No. 727)—distinguished beyond all other works there for the majestic conception of the Father. In this face, so full of beauty and power, of intensity and calm, as well as in the careful modelling of the pathetic figure of Christ upon the cross, Pesellino touches heights which Lippi could not reach; but in the charming cherubim and seraphim with which the severity

of the subject is softened and decorated, and in the beauty of the colour (though that has suffered much), we may recognise the influence of his master. We have only to compare this picture with the representations of the same subject by Landini (No. 580A) and Orcagna (No. 570) to show how the power to render the most august subjects had been increased by progress in technical accomplishment and the liberation of the artist's imagination, even when the elements and arrangements of the composition remained virtually unchanged.

Of all the artists of the fifteenth century, there was no one who more fully exercised his imaginative faculty than Sandro Filipepi, generally called Botticelli, and no one who more fully represents the spirit of the Renaissance. He was a great church painter, infusing his own strong and abundant life into the oft-repeated themes of ecclesiastical art. Like his master, Lippi, he conceived them over again, but in a still more romantic spirit, and with a vigour and energy unknown before. But his imagination was also captured by the poetic legends of the ancient pagan world, and by the romantic inventions of his own countrymen. If not the first to choose subjects from the poets of

Greece and Rome, he was the first to illustrate a modern one. His designs to the "Divina Commedia" (once in the possession of Lord Ashburnham, but now in the museum at Berlin) show how thoroughly he was affected by the spirit of Dante. Some of the most original motives in his great altar-pieces can be traced to the influence of the great poem on his imagination, and he not only illustrated but annotated it. He painted pictures also from the tales of Boccaccio.

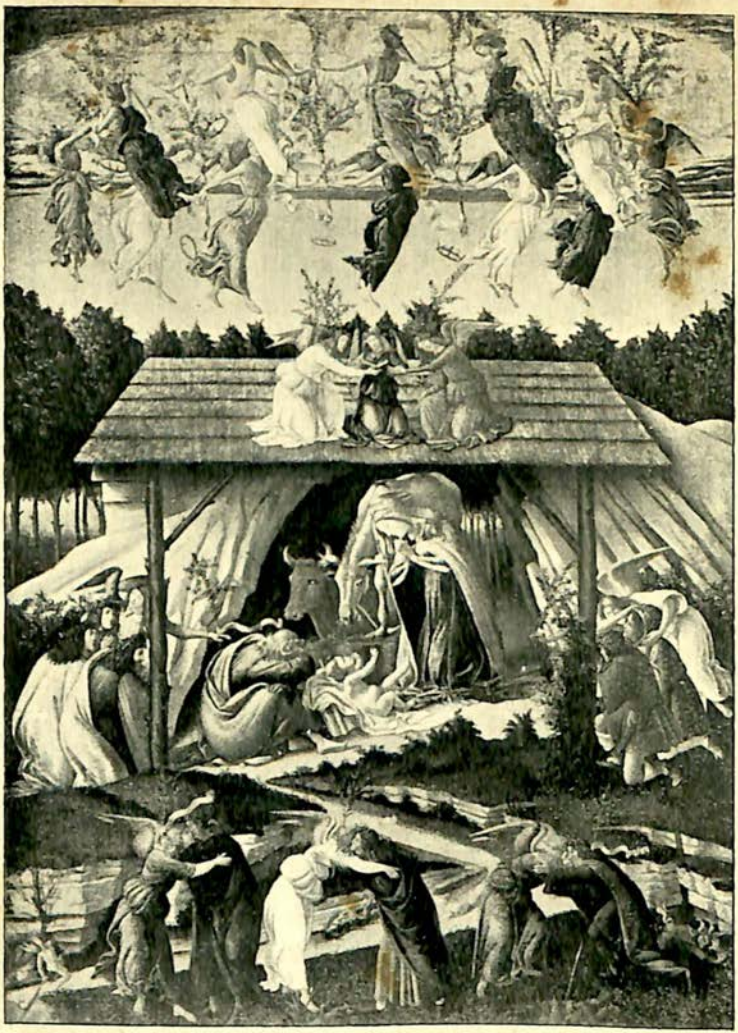
The pictures by Botticelli in the National Gallery illustrate many sides of his genius, if they do not show its full range. The largest, "The Assumption of the Virgin" (No. 1126), is original and grand in its conception, the wide expanse of sky being filled with great zones of the angelic hierarchy and all the company of heaven, while below, and behind the figures of the Apostles who stand round the Virgin's tomb, we see the valley of the Arno, with the city of Florence and another town. The wonderful energy of the angels and the boldness of the design attest the invention of Botticelli, and its history from the date it left that artist's *bottega* is complete; but it is thought by some to have been executed by his pupils, and in any case it is too much damaged to be, in its present state,

a satisfactory example of his skill. This picture is supposed to have been painted about 1472, or when the painter was about twenty-six, and is therefore a striking witness of the reputation he acquired at an early age, especially if his position was so secure that he could afford to leave the execution of so important a work in the hands of his pupils.

As Matteo Palmieri, who had written a poem somewhat in the manner of Dante, was a friend of Botticelli, it does not appear probable that the artist would have spared any personal pains in the execution of this picture; but however that may be, it is satisfactory to feel assured that no kind of doubt exists as to the hand which executed the smaller but much more interesting and beautiful work which hangs near it to the left, on the east wall.* This picture, "The Nativity" (No. 1034), is "signed all over." From the inscription upon it, it appears to have been painted in the year 1500, or nearly thirty years after "The Assumption;" and though Botticelli lived till 1510, there is no work from his hand to which a later date has been assigned. In this picture we see that intensity of feeling, which is the peculiar characteristic of

* It has now been removed to Room I.

Botticelli, strained to its highest pitch. It does not need the inscription upon it to tell us that it was produced under great excitement. The fervour of the still Madonna, as she kneels before the Child; the extraordinary nervous tension which the artist has managed to suggest in the seated figure of Joseph; the rapture of the angels below at meeting their redeemed friends; the ardour of the angels at the sides, who introduce the awestricken shepherds and kings; and, finally, the wild ecstasy of the angels above as they dance around the throne, present such a picture of highly wrought emotion as even Botticelli himself has never equalled. Between the execution of the two pictures he had lived his life, a life of which we know little, except what we can learn from his works; but that is sufficient evidence that he had felt and probably suffered more than most men. His youth, we know, was one of remarkable success. After the death of his master, Lippi, he was reckoned, according to Vasari, the best painter in Florence. A few years after he painted the "Assumption" (the date assigned is 1481), he was summoned to Rome by Sixtus IV., to take part in the decoration of the famous chapel which the Pope had built in 1473.



THE NATIVITY.—*Botticelli*

Here his associates were the most celebrated artists of Florence and Umbria—Signorelli, Perugino, Cosimo Rosselli, and Ghirlandajo, and it is said that Sandro was appointed to superintend the whole of the decorative works. His frescoes there of the "History of Moses," the "Temptation," and the "Destruction of Korah," are full of his fiery spirit, and deserve to be more generally known and studied than they are. They are of much interest in connection with the two pictures with which we are at present concerned, as they are about equidistant in date between them, and combine much of the exaggerated gesture of the later, with groups as calm and dignified as the Apostles in "The Assumption." From the inscription on "The Nativity" it would appear that the painter was suffering from strong religious excitement. It was painted under the conviction that the devil was then let loose for three years and a half, as foretold in the Revelation of S. John, and in glorious expectation of the time when he should again be chained and trodden down. As Botticelli was one of the most fervent followers of Savonarola, and the picture was painted but two years after the burning of the Dominican and the downfall of that short-lived "Kingdom of Christ," which he

endeavoured to establish in Florence, it is only reasonable to conclude that this vision of the triumph of the Redeemer was the flash of an imagination still inflamed with the fierce enthusiasm of those unforgotten days; a reaction from a terrible disappointment; a prophecy of the near fulfilment of his hopes. It is also probable that such a man, convinced by the teaching of the monk, that all his pictures, or at least all those inspired by pagan feeling, like the "Mars and Venus," in Room I., were worthy only of the flames, should, as Vasari tells us, have renounced painting and fallen into distress. It is in no way opposed to this theory that Botticelli should have painted this particular picture, nor even that he should have served, in 1503, on a committee appointed to select a site for Michael Angelo's statute of David. There appears to be no doubt of the poverty of his later years, nor of the support which he received from his old patrons the Medici, and other friends, until his death in 1510.

The other works ascribed to Botticelli in the Gallery were no doubt executed in the interval between the "Assumption" and the "Nativity." Three of them are certainly school or *bottega* pictures, works executed by his pupils, more or

less after designs and pictures by himself. In the picture of "Venus reclining with Cupids" (No. 916) we can see that the figure of the goddess is a poor imitation of the goddess in "Mars and Venus" (No. 915).

There remain three pictures ascribed to Botticelli, of the authenticity of which there is no doubt—(1) the firmly characterised portrait of a Florentine youth in a red cap (No. 626), drawn with the greatest precision, and still bright and transparent in colour; (2) "The Virgin and Child, S. John the Baptist and an Angel" (No. 275), in which the angel is equal in feeling and execution to his finest work, and the Virgin broods over her Child with her face full of that sweet but awful wonder which he only knew how to suggest. The picture once belonged to San Gallo the architect, who was a friend of the artist, and it is mainly the Child which suggests that another hand may have been employed upon it; but this question is of little importance, except to experts, as even if the Child were proved to be entirely painted by Botticelli, it would not make it beautiful. (3) The "Mars and Venus," which proves that he could treat classical and religious subjects with equal vehemence. It has not the mystical grace

of the famous "Spring" in the Academy at Florence; nor the dramatic power of the "Calumny," nor the imaginative force of "The Birth of Venus," both of which are in the Uffizzi; but it is dramatic and mystic, and powerful also, and in the frolicking young fauns who are playing with Mars' armour, it has an element of humour which is absent in the other pictures. It is exceedingly interesting as an example of his strange ideal of female beauty and of manly beauty also; but with regard to this, and the drawing of the nude figure, what I have to say must be reserved for the present. It will be sufficient, now, to note the vividness with which he has realised his conception of the triumph of Beauty over Strength. As Venus looks at Mars, so might Delilah have looked at Samson, or Omphale at Hercules. As a *pendant* to it at the present moment hangs another dream by another Florentine artist of the old world of classic poetry. The gentle pathos of the tragedy of "Cephalus and Procris" (No. 698), as conceived by Piero di Cosimo (1462–1521?), affords a strong contrast to the concentrated passion of Botticelli's Venus, but to both these artists it was given to visit the true land of romance, which is for ever closed to all who

cannot approach it with childlike hearts and wondering eyes. As if to enforce this truth, there is hung between these two pictures a laboured allegory by Bronzino (1502–1572) of "Venus, Cupid, Folly, and Time" (No. 651), which in technical accomplishment far exceeds anything that either Sandro or Piero could do, but yet utterly fails to touch any note of poetical feeling whatever.

By Filippino Lippi (1457?–1504), the most celebrated pupil of Botticelli, whose father died when he was about twelve years old, there are six reputed pictures, but the only two which can with any certainty be ascribed to his hand are the exquisite "Angel adoring" (No. 927) (a fragment of fresco hanging in Room II.), and the fine and thoroughly characteristic "Virgin and Child; S. Jerome and S. Dominic adoring the Infant Christ" (No. 293), a picture which was originally painted for the Rucellai family and placed in the no longer existing church of S. Pancrazio at Florence. In the drawing of the torso of S. Jerome, and in the truth and picturesque design of the landscape, it shows a considerable advance beyond his father and his master. It is darkened with age and varnish, but is still very rich and harmonious in its colour, and the quiet but deep

feeling of the heads, which seems to rest midway between the repose of his father and the excitement of his master, is quite unimpaired. The pretty little picture of "S. Francis in Glory" (No. 598), dated 1492, with its charming innocent angels playing and dancing above him, betrays his spirit if not his hand, and the "Adoration of the Magi" (No. 1124) is probably an early work of his. It cannot, however, compare in interest with the two other "Adorations" (Nos. 592 and 1033), which are still ascribed to him in the catalogue, in spite of the protest of the late Signor Morelli, Dr. Richter, and many other modern authorities. The round picture (No. 1033), in Room III., has been unfortunately much damaged, but the other, in Room I., though not undamaged, is exceptionally well preserved. They are both full of life and character, and swarming with incident and invention. To take one of them only (No. 592), where else, except in the other, shall we find such a range of human expression, from the dignified gravity of S. Joseph to the fantastic humour of the dwarf? Where else shall we find such an assemblage of men of all ages, of many countries, of divers temperaments? No two are alike, except perhaps the two shepherds, who are

approaching from the right, and they are different from all the rest. Who else besides Botticelli was capable of the sustained energy of imagination, the versatility and ingenuity of mind, required to conceive such a scene and execute it without failure or weakness in any part? I, for one, long clung to its ascription to Filippino, in spite of the evidences of its colour, and the types of many of the figures which were distinctly Botticellian, because on the whole it had too much repose. The gestures were not sufficiently vehement, the faces of many were too placid, and their hair was not sufficiently ropy. Besides, all the Botticellian features might have been borrowed by the pupil, and the master could not borrow his pupil's restraint. Of all the reasons which have made me alter my opinion there is not space to speak, and it would be beyond the intended scope of this book to enter fully into such questions of controversy; but it may help others to form their own opinion if they remember that, before Botticelli painted his picture of the "Assumption," the earliest acknowledged work of his in the National Gallery, he had passed through a course of training under the Pollaiuoli, as well as under Fra Lippo Lippi, and that this picture shows the

influence of both masters. If from Lippi he could learn the charm of human expression, as of the man with his hand up to his face, it was not from him, but from Pollaiuolo, that he could learn to draw that figure of the man with bare knees and high boots, who stands beyond the Magi with head and arm raised. (Compare Lippi's Peter Martyr in the S. John picture for expression, and Pollaiuolo's S. Sebastian (No. 292) for the figure.) This figure, a little altered in attitude but quite recognisable, is to be seen in his picture of "Spring," and also in his celebrated "Adoration," now in the Uffizzi, into which he has introduced the portraits of the Medici.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BUILDING OF THE PALACE.

ALTHOUGH the subject and treatment may be unattractive to many, no one who wishes to study the history of Italian painting, as seen in the National Gallery, can afford to neglect the famous "Martyrdom of S. Sebastian" (No. 292), by Pollaiuolo, or, perhaps more correctly, the Pollaiuoli, as, though the design is doubtless by Antonio (1429?–1498), the execution is thought to have been, at least partly, performed by his younger brother and pupil Pietro (b. 1443). It has, at least, special claims to attention. In the first place, it is the earliest picture in the gallery (it was finished in 1475) which shows very distinctly the study of the human form for its own sake, and, secondly, it is the first Italian picture we have which is entirely completed in an oil medium. Pesellino must, no doubt, have studied the figure carefully before he could have drawn the Christ

in his "Trinita" (No. 727), but his chief interest was in the pathos of the subject and not in its anatomy, and though Piero della Francesca's "The Nativity of our Lord" (No. 908), which is painted in oil, may run Pollaiuolo's picture close in matter of date, it is unfinished, and its method is more Flemish. The Pollaiuolo picture has other distinctions also. It is one of the pictures described by Vasari, and was considered in his day, as it is in our own, as the masterpiece (in painting) of the artist (or artists). "In painting," be it observed, as Antonio, like many of the painters of the day, was not only a painter but a goldsmith and sculptor; and an engraver also, famous for his niello work. He was among the first to practice dissection, and his knowledge of anatomy and perspective, and his delight and pride in it, are evident enough in this masterwork of his, which may be taken as rising to the highest level of technical achievement in draughtsmanship and painting which had been reached in Florence at the time.

It is very evident that this picture, notwithstanding the pathetic figure of the saint, was designed to show off to the greatest advantage the artist's knowledge of anatomy and his skill

in foreshortening. It will be seen that the figures are arranged so as to show the complete body of each from a different point of view: sideways, full-face, and from the back, bending and straight; some from above, some on a level with the eye, and one (S. Sebastian) from below. The work is not less remarkable for the extent and variety of the landscape, and for the sense of aërial, as distinct from mere linear, perspective. Instead of standing up like a wall behind the figures, as in the pictures by Uccello and Piero della Francesca,* it appears to recede to the horizon, as in nature, and in one little picture by Andrea del Castagno, who was the master of Pietro Pollaiuolo. The study of the remains of classical art also is betrayed by the introduction of one of the Roman monumental arches in the background. The groups of soldiers and horses at different distances further attest the variety of the designer's artistic interests, and add to the life and reality of the scene, every corner of which is stirring with the energy of the Renaissance. But dominant, supremely dominant, through all, is the revived

* At least those in the National Gallery. No one who has seen the landscape behind Piero's portraits of Duke Guidobaldo and his wife in the Uffizzi can doubt his power in aërial perspective.

interest in the figure of man for its own sake,—not, or at least not only, as a means of spiritual expression, as with Fra Angelico and his forerunners; not yet as the standard of beauty, as with the sculptors of Greece or the masters of the sixteenth century, but as a miracle of organised structure, a machine of unrivalled complexity and economy, of suppleness and strength, Protean in its contours, inexhaustible in its ever-shifting play of curves and angles, infinite in its indication of feeling. This is "the human form divine," not as the shrine of the Holy Spirit nor the ideal of Beauty, but as the most marvellous of created things, the masterpiece of Divine invention.

It will be observed that S. Sebastian, as nearly always in Italian art, is gazing upward calmly, as if raised above the consciousness of physical suffering, and careless of the cruelty of his torturers. Often as this saint is represented in the National Gallery, the only instance I know to the contrary is a little figure in the predella of an altar-piece by Crivelli (No. 724), where he is wincing at the pain of an arrow which has transfixed his leg. The pathos of the figure in Pollaiuolo's picture is conveyed, not so much by facial expression as by the dignity of the whole

body, which, with its arms pinioned, stands helpless and heroic, as a mark for the cold-blooded executioners. In other words, it is the design of a painter strongly influenced by sculpturesque feeling. It bears a very marked resemblance to the sculptured figure of S. Sebastian in the cathedral of Lucca, which was executed much about the same time by Matteo Civitale. There was only about two years' difference between the ages of these two artists. Whether Civitale was under obligation to Pollaiuolo, or Pollaiuolo to Civitale, it is difficult to decide, but both were under obligation to Donatello and Ghiberti. The picture was finished in 1475; the statue probably between 1472 and 1484. There is a cast of the latter in the South Kensington Museum. The other figures in the picture, though also statuesque, suggest, by their sharpness and angularity, rather the worker in metal than in marble, the goldsmith rather than the sculptor.

It is a great pity that the movements in sculpture and painting in Italy, at all events before the sixteenth century, cannot be studied together in the National Gallery. The one art acted and reacted on the other in a remarkable manner. In those days there were no pedantic notions as to

exact lines of demarcation between the two. Sculpture for a long time naturally took the lead. It had never been so near extinction as painting. Its association with Gothic architecture had kept it alive in the centuries before the Renaissance, and, long before the birth of Giotto, Nicolo Pisano (1205?–1278) had found new inspiration in such relics of classical art in Italy as still remained above ground. These were mainly Roman sarcophagi, like the famous ones now in the Medici Palace at Florence, which once stood about the Baptistery there. Painting was long before it could catch up either the style or the skill of such works as Pisano's pulpit in the Baptistery at Pisa, which can be studied in the full-sized cast at South Kensington Museum. But, as if to help the painters who had no such models, the early Italian sculptors showed a decided leaning towards the picturesque. The Roman sarcophagi probably began it, with their crowded and animated groups; but the Italian reliefs became still more crowded and animated. We find Donatello (1383–1466) and Ghiberti (1381–1455) no longer content with a single plane, but attempting scenes in which figures are introduced behind figures with perspective views of

architecture and other subjects. The picturesque illusion after which they both strove was gained more successfully by Ghiberti, who, in the panels of those wonderful doors for the Baptistery at Florence (his second or "golden" gates), managed to give the effect of distance between his groups, and even of woods and hills behind them. Thus, even in landscape, the sculptor may be said to have shown the way to the painter, and in connection with our picture of S. Sebastian, it is interesting to remember that Antonio Pollaiuolo was employed when an apprentice by his master, the goldsmith Bartoluccio, in modelling some of the ornaments of the architrave of these very doors.

One of the most distinguished contemporaries of Antonio Pollaiuolo was Andrea Verrocchio (1432–1488), his junior by about three years. He also was an artist of high and various accomplishments as goldsmith and sculptor and painter. His splendid monument to Bartolommeo Colleoni at Venice is one of the finest equestrian statues in the world, and greater than anything Pollaiuolo did. He was also more distinguished as a teacher, numbering amongst his pupils Leonardo da Vinci, Perugino, and Lorenzo di Credi. By him we have

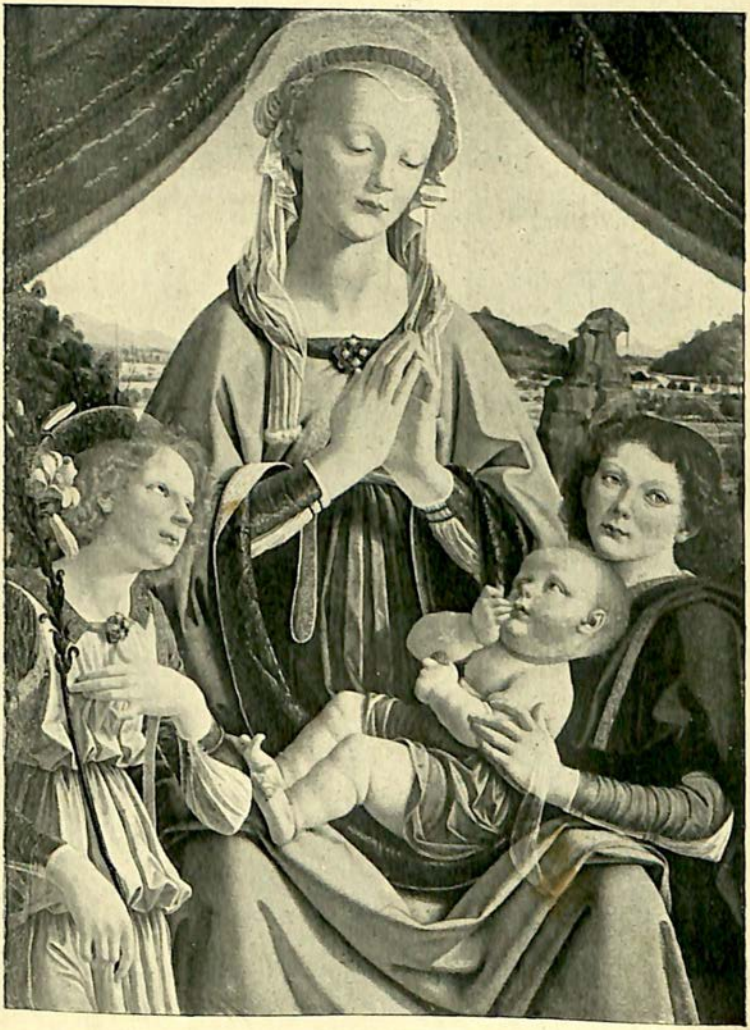
no picture; indeed, there is but one in the world which can be positively ascribed to him, the well-known "Baptism of Christ" in the Accademia at Florence;* but we have two pictures by an exquisite artist of his school, whose identity is one of puzzles of art scholarship. These are "The Virgin adoring the Infant Christ, with an Angel standing on each side of her" (No. 296), and "The Angel Raphael accompanies Tobias on his journey into Media, to marry Sara, the daughter of Raguel."† The former picture, though anonymous, is one of the most characteristic and beautiful examples of Florentine art in the second half of the fifteenth century. It shows the most delicate appreciation of the beauty of the human body, especially in the hands and the heads of the angels. Hardly elsewhere shall we find hands so refined in modelling and so subtle in their curves, or faces of so sweet and childlike a loveliness. The type of the Virgin and that of the angel Raphael (in No. 781), and

* There is an interesting and beautiful, but much-damaged, picture in the Ruskin Museum at Sheffield which is assigned to Verrocchio. A monograph on the subject, by Mr. White, the curator of the museum, is in preparation, and may be expected to throw much light on Verrocchio's work generally.

† There are other pictures evidently by the same unknown hand. One of these is "Tobias attended by three Archangels," in the Accademia at Florence, ascribed to Botticelli.

the treatment of the hair, resemble the few extant drawings by Verrocchio more than those perhaps of any other master; and the angel on the left in No. 296 bears a striking likeness to one in Verrocchio's picture of "The Baptism" before mentioned, which Vasari tells us was painted by Leonardo da Vinci, a pupil of Verrocchio. He goes on to say that Verrocchio, perceiving that this figure was much superior to other parts of the picture, "resolved never again to take pencil in hand, since Leonardo, though still so young, had acquitted himself in that art [of painting] better than he had done." Although this, like nearly all Vasari's pretty stories, is discredited now, the likeness between the angel in Verrocchio's picture and that in the National Gallery gives some support to the view that the unknown painter of No. 296 was a pupil of Verrocchio. Among his pupils, tradition reckons, as I have already said, the names of Perugino (b. 1446), Leonardo da Vinci (b. 1452), and, youngest and best beloved, Lorenzo di Credi (b. 1459). The dates given show that is improbable that this unknown painter should have been a fellow-pupil of all these three; but he seems to have been imbued with something of the spirit of each. "The Virgin Adoring," in

its calm, pietistic spirit, reminds one of the great Umbrian master, rather than any contemporary Florentine. In its extreme refinement of form and expression it recalls Leonardo, and that it is in many ways extremely like the work of Lorenzo di Credi any one, who compares it with the pictures by the latter master, which hang close to it, can see for himself. The Child, as some one has said, seems to have been cast in the same mould as those of Lorenzo. The colour is like Lorenzo's, but less florid, and in the background of No. 593 will be seen, coming down the garden walk, little figures of Tobit and the angel, that might have tripped out of or into the unknown master's picture of this subject. But there is a distinction about the nameless painter which is beyond Lorenzo, and it would seem on the face of it probable that di Credi had more need to borrow from such an artist than he from di Credi. In the presence of pictures of so rare a quality as "The Virgin adoring the Infant Christ," one does not need the authority of a great name to stimulate admiration, and it seems a matter of minor importance, whether they proceeded from the hand of one master or another, and of still less moment, whether they proceeded from one studio or another.



THE VIRGIN ADORING THE INFANT CHRIST.—*Tuscan School.*

Yet such questions are not only interesting—fascinating it may be said, to those who undertake such quests — but on the answers often much depends of still greater importance. In this case the inquiry is of no common interest, as the work is essentially fine, and breathes the presence of a distinct and rare individuality. In many, if not in most, cases of doubtful origin, the picture itself is of no very great intrinsic merit, one which on the face of it must be either the work of an inferior artist at his best, or of a superior one at his worst. Even in these cases the doubt is often well worth resolving—but here we have, to begin with, a work of exceptional beauty, which must either be an early work of some known great artist, like Leonardo da Vinci, in a style which he outgrew, or else of some one quite unknown, whose name rests in undeserved oblivion. We will hope that both his name and his history may one day be recovered. Meanwhile, it is not a matter of very great importance, whether Verrocchio or Pollaiuolo is the better entitled to be called his master, for it is pretty evident that both artists (at least by their works) had some share in his education. The two masters may have been rivals, but the spirit of faction did not at least run so high among their pupils as to

blind them to the merits of the other school. Though Botticelli was undoubtedly a pupil of Pollaiuolo, the type of the angels in his picture of "The Assumption of the Virgin" has been said to show the influence of Verrocchio, and I do not think that any one who compares the angels in Verrocchio's picture of "The Baptism of Christ" (before referred to) with the two youths in Botticelli's celebrated *tondo* of "The Virgin and Child with Angels" in the Uffizzi, can doubt that Botticelli had the former consciously or unconsciously in his memory, when he drew them. The youth with the long hair, who is holding the ink-horn, corresponds in type and position to the angel attributed to Leonardo in Verrocchio's picture. The youths or angels (they are without wings) in Botticelli's *tondo* are said to represent some members of the Medici family, and if so, perhaps those in Verrocchio's picture, and those in "The Virgin Adoring" in the National Gallery, may do so also. It is at all events evident that the originals of these beautiful children, however elevated by the refinement of the artist, belonged to no common stock.

Nor can there be any doubt that this extremely elegant type, dainty to a degree unknown before,

has a close affinity to the ideal of Leonardo da Vinci. The perfection of the execution of this beautiful picture, in which complete finish of the most delicate detail is achieved without a sense of over-elaboration or difficulty, betrays also a hand and eye almost as fastidious and highly trained as Leonardo's. A comparison between it and Leonardo's "The Virgin of the Rocks" (No. 1093) does not, indeed, tend to support the notion that Leonardo had any hand in our anonymous picture, but it shows that both artists were united in their aim—to express the beauty of the soul by a beauty of the body at once graceful and gracious, tender and elevated, removed by its refinement from ordinary types, and yet exquisitely human and sympathetic. The two artists were probably much of the same age, but Leonardo (b. 1452) was so far in advance of his time, that he is generally regarded rather as the coeval of Michael Angelo (b. 1475) and Raphael (b. 1483), who belonged to the next generation of artists. This "Virgin of the Rocks" may have been painted before Raphael was born, and Domenico Ghirlandajo, who was only about three years Leonardo's senior, was the master of Michael Angelo.

Yet when we turn from the "The Virgin of the

Rocks" to the three portraits, which are unfortunately the only means we have in the National Gallery for estimating the genius of this truly great artist, we seem to be travelling back at least a quarter of a century. Instead of the oil-method, the difficulties of which we see mastered by Leonardo, we have the primitive method of tempera; instead of the soul pouring from the face and form, we have a precise rendering of fact; instead of the tenderest and most flexible modelling, we have a careful rigidity of contour; instead of the mysterious light and shade, shedding a magic over the scene, we have all things made out plainly in diffused light; instead of the most complete relief, we have comparative flatness; instead of the most intimate knowledge of construction, we have but a careful observation of superficial phenomena; instead of a mobile consistency of flesh, we have a tight, parchment-like cuticle. In artistic method and intention Ghirlandajo is more like Botticelli than Leonardo. In feeling he was as far apart from one as from the other.

There is, perhaps, no great artist, represented at all in the National Gallery, whose genius is less illustrated than that of Ghirlandajo. Mr. H.

Willett's portrait of the wife of Lorenzo de' Tornabuoni is a very fine example of workmanship; but it represents his genius as much as, and no more than, a solitary figure cut out of one of Raphael's cartoons would represent that of Raphael. Despite the limitation of his mind and aims, Ghirlandajo occupies a very important position in the history of Florentine art, especially as a composer of those great scenic frescoes which covered the walls of the churches in the time of the Renaissance. He is a prominent figure in the great line between Giotto and Masaccio on the one hand, and Michael Angelo and Raphael on the other. He was gifted with a remarkable power of stately and sumptuous composition, and succeeded in combining rich groups of noble figures with surroundings of splendid architecture, so as to produce in artistic unity such grandiose spectacles as the world had scarcely seen before. He took every advantage of the fine models which the foremost families at Florence, such as the Medici, the Tornabuoni, the Tornaquinci, and the Sassetti, freely and willingly placed at his disposal; he dressed them in all that luxury of rich robe and jewelled ornament, the indulgence in which was carried to an excess in the Florence of

his day, nor did any consideration of historical propriety deter him from imagining the great events of Biblical history as taking place in halls and chambers of princely amplitude, adorned with all the magnificence and teeming fancy of the architects and sculptors of the Renaissance. For such superbly decorative compositions as those he painted in the choir of S. Maria Novella at Florence, where he represented members of the Tornabuoni and other high families as assisting in scenes from the history of the Virgin and S. John Baptist, we may look in vain in our National Gallery. Perhaps the nearest approach to them may be found in the work of a very different painter of a very different school, "The Family of Darius at the feet of Alexander, after the Battle of Issus, B.C. 333" (No. 294), by Caliari (Paolo Veronese), which hangs in the great Venetian Gallery (Room VII.). Putting aside all these great dissimilarities between the two artists, they had these qualities in common; they used historical subjects as the means of introducing, in the most honourable and picturesque manner, the portraits of distinguished contemporaries; their idea of a picture was to assemble and arrange within a given space, in the most beautiful order,

the most beautiful forms and colours, so as to produce a beautiful whole composed of beautiful parts; they both delighted in the most stately figures, the richest costumes, the most imposing architecture; and, finally, they were both very reticent of emotional expression and of violent action.

In this last respect Ghirlandajo presents a strong contrast to his contemporary and rival Botticelli. To judge them by their works, Ghirlandajo had one of the most phlegmatic, Botticelli one of the most sanguine, of temperaments. We can only contrast them here by portraits. Of the general superficial aspect of a face, of its "still-life" appearance, few artists probably could produce a more faithful record than Ghirlandajo, but of the subtlety or intensity of the character which lay below he could tell us little. The portraits by Ghirlandajo now hanging in the National Gallery—the "Bust Portrait of a Girl" (No. 1230), the "Portrait of a Youth" (No. 1299), and the best of the three, lent by Mr. Willett, are doubtless all faithful likenesses, and they are executed with great skill and care; but for individuality they will bear no comparison with the "Portrait of a Young Man" (No. 626), which

is now by common consent ascribed to Botticelli. The determined character of this young man in the red cap is seized and, as it were, engraved, in the firm lines in the nose, mouth, and eyes, at once and for ever. It is a face which would be recognised in a crowd by any one who had seen the picture. And yet the features are of no uncommon type. One cannot say the same of the Ghirlandajo portraits; not of the man, nor of the girl, nor even of Mr. Willett's lady, though she was one of the beauties of the day, and remarkable, as the inscription showeth, for mental as well as physical charm. One knows as much about her as if one had met her once in passing on a staircase, no more. She is "icily perfect, splendidly null." One observes and remembers less of herself than of her costume. It is easier to forget her face than her elaborate coiffure, the ornament on her dress, with its rich arrangement of reds and oranges and yellows, or even the beautiful jewels on the shelf beside her. As she appears here, she appears in Ghirlandajo's fresco of the Salutation of the Virgin in S. Maria Novella, one of the attendants or friends of S. Elizabeth, richly dressed, with the same long, stiff neck and round bust, standing at the entrance

of a magnificent palace (presumably that of Zacharias), with the same air, calm, dignified, and indifferent. One can imagine how Botticelli would have represented her, comparatively still, perhaps, as a spectator whose emotion should not rival that of the principal characters, but yet all alive, with at least an animated face of expectancy and a suggestive flutter of a robe.

Yet these two artists were very closely allied in everything but temperament, and their careers ran side by side. There was but a difference of two years in their ages, Ghirlandajo (1449–1494) being the junior. They both, though painters, worked at first under goldsmiths. Ghirlandajo's father, Bigordi, was a silk-broker, and his son is supposed to have derived the appellation of Ghirlandajo from his master, who was celebrated for skill in manufacturing the golden garlands, or head wreaths, which were so much in favour with the Florentine ladies of the day. All this jeweller's pupils were, it is said, termed "del Ghirlandajo.' His first teacher in painting is supposed to have been Cosimo Rosselli or Alesso Baldovinetti. In 1475 he was employed with Botticelli in painting the Sistine Chapel, where his fresco of the "Calling of S. Peter and S.

Andrew" is distinguished from Botticelli's by the stateliness and simplicity of its composition and the calm dignity of its figures. In these respects he most plainly shows that it was Masaccio, of all painters, that he desired to emulate. He shows this also by the introduction of a crowd of spectators drawn up, with their heads on a level, on each side of the group of principal actors, and performing, as has been said, much the same function with regard to them as the chorus of a Greek tragedy. Five years later we find him again associated with Botticelli in the church of the Ognissanti at Florence, where his fresco of S. Jerome in his study is preserved side by side with one of S. Augustine by Botticelli. The former is careful even to laboriousness, in the way all the contents of the chamber are wrought out. A Van Eyck or an Albert Dürer could scarcely have taken more pains with these details, but the figure, though fine in type, and not without a thoughtful dignity, appears heavy and cold beside Botticelli's ardent conception of S. Augustine. Later, both artists were engaged in decorating the Sala del Orologio (now the Sala dei Gigli) in the Palazzo Pubblico. The plague cut short Ghirlandajo's life in 1494, in his forty-fifth year, six years after he

THE VIRGIN AND CHILD ENTHRONED; ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST AND THE MAGDALEN.—*Andrea Mantegna*

painted this portrait of Giovanna Tornabuoni, and six years before Botticelli painted "The Nativity of our Saviour," which lately hung beside it in the National Gallery.

Associated in life, they are now associated in death in a strange country, by reason of the power of their gifts in the same beautiful art. We wish that we had more details of their private lives, and especially of their relations one with each other; but on this point history is unfortunately silent. We know little more than that they lived and worked in Florence, in that teeming time of Italian art, which produced Lippo Lippi, Benozzo Gozzoli, Pesellino, the Pollaiuoli, Verrocchio, Rosselli, Botticelli, Ghirlandajo, Leonardo da Vinci, Filippino Lippi, Lorenzo di Credi, Piero di Cosimo, and the young Michael Angelo. If we add to these such architects as Bramante and San Gallo, such sculptors as the Maiani and the younger Della Robbias, and if we fancy them all gathered in the palace of the Medici in the Via Larga, together with the famous scholars and poets of the day, and surrounded by the precious collections of ancient and modern sculpture, and gems and coins, and manuscripts and pictures, which that palace then contained, we shall regret still

more that we have such scanty knowledge of the intercourse which passed between the members of this gallant company. Yet we may thus at least form some notion of the variety and force of the artistic and intellectual energy with which they were surrounded. That the ideas so profusely generated in such an atmosphere did not remain stagnant in the authors' minds, the pictures even in the National Gallery are sufficient warrant. They show how freely these ideas played, how well the masters taught, giving all they knew but without affecting the individuality of their pupils; how in turn the pupils borrowed freely from their masters and others' masters and each other, without a fear of being accused of theft or plagiarism, enjoying an intellectual communism, which was very fruitful in the development of art, though, as in the case of "The Virgin Adoring," it may sometimes puzzle the experts of to-day.

With the artists whose works are the subject of this chapter, practically ends a definite period in the history of Florentine art; with the pupil of Ghirlandajo—the great Michael Angelo—begins another, the only Florentine artist who may be said to belong to both being Leonardo da Vinci. The period in which they flourished was, roughly,

the last half of the fifteenth century, the lifetime of Lorenzo de' Medici (1448–1497). It was a time of comparative quiet for Florence, especially after Lorenzo had made peace with its enemies in 1480. The former period had indeed been more troubled, and in the celebrated Pazzi conspiracy, his brother Giuliano had been murdered and he himself had had a narrow escape, but it ended in consolidating his power over Florence, which became as absolute as that of his grandfather, the great Cosimo. It was, no doubt, partly due to the peaceful state of the city, partly to Lorenzo's patronage, partly to the wealth which Florence had accumulated, that art of all kinds flourished so greatly, and that the art of painting in particular made such rapid progress in the days of Lorenzo the Magnificent. But without remarkable energy and genius in the artists themselves, no such results could have been achieved; for, despite the progress that had been made in the earlier part of the century, and the phenomenal genius of Masaccio, the science of painting was still in comparative infancy when these men were young. But their progress was not only technical; they, indeed, studied anatomy and perspective, and made great improvements in composition, in

drawing, and in colouring, but they also greatly extended the domain of the art with regard to subject, made a very great advance in landscape and portrait, and taught painting to reflect the life and thought of the day in spite of the restrictions of their generally religious themes. By the time that they had finished their work, the palace of Italian art had risen high, and needed the aid only of a few master-builders to complete the edifice.

What they did was nothing more nor less than the construction of a new and lovely language to express the whole emotions of humanity. The old language upon which theirs was based, was only capable of expressing one limited class of feeling, a religious feeling, certainly, but only a limited class of that, strictly confined to man's hopes and fears of the future state, as instigated by dogmas of the Church. They made this restricted language almost as universal as words, showing its capacity to express every joy and every sorrow, every feeling and every thought to which the mind, body, and soul of man is sensitive. They did not perfect it; Italy itself did not perfect it; it is not even perfected now; but they did more towards the desired end than any

other body of men have done in the same time. It is for this that their works claim special consideration, not only from the student of art but the student of humanity.

To look upon their work from another point of view, it may be said that they re-discovered Beauty, progressing slowly and by degrees to the recognition of the human body as the standard of all beauty expressed in form. The general dignity of its presence was felt by Giotto, by Masaccio, by Ghirlandajo; the wonder of its construction by Pollaiuolo; its capacity for expressing passionate emotion by Botticelli; but the perfectly harmonic relation of each part to the beauty of its organisation as a whole nobody as yet had felt except, perhaps, Leonardo da Vinci. How soon Michael Angelo did so is evident from that early picture of "The Madonna and Infant Christ, S. John the Baptist and Angels" (No. 809), which was once considered to be the work of his master Ghirlandajo, to whom he was apprenticed for three years, in April, 1488, being at that time of the age of thirteen years.

CHAPTER V.

THE VALLEYS OF PEACE.

FAR away from Florence, that busy centre of commercial, intellectual, æsthetic, and political activity, the beautiful hills and plains of Umbria favoured a more restful and meditative spirit. Always the home of purely religious art, it became so more exclusively after the death of Fra Angelico, the last of the Florentines who devoted himself entirely to the older ideal of Italian painting—the perfection of spiritual expression. Umbria may, indeed, be said to have been the Fra Angelico of Italy, for it resisted more than other districts the tendency to secularisation in art, the claims of realism, and the fascination of pagan ideals.

It was at Assisi, near Perugia, the chief city of Umbria, that S. Francis was born. It was there that he died, and was buried under the double church dedicated to his name, a very shrine of art

and religion, with walls painted all over by Giotto and Cimabue and Memmi, and other artists of the fourteenth century. At Perugia, in the paintings of its great artist Perugino, the Umbrian spirit of religious aspiration and ecstasy reached its purest height, but this spirit was not confined to Perugia, nor even to the geographical limits of Umbria, but it extended to the west and the north over the Appennines to Urbino and San Sepolcro, to San Severino, Forli, and Cortona, and the artists of these and other places situated in Tuscany, in Emilia, and the Marches (Raphael and Piero della Francesca, Lorenzo da St. Severino, Melozzo da Forli and Signorelli), are all counted of the school of Umbria.

In all Umbrian pictures permeated by the true spirit of the locality, there is a hush as of the country, and of no common country, but of a land of sacred beauty and peace, a paradise on earth; and a special quiet seems to pervade Room VI., in which our Umbrian pictures are hung.

Art in Umbria during the fifteenth century moved more gently than in Florence, but it did not stagnate. It had its centres of culture and its lordly art patrons at Gubbio and Perugia, at Urbino and elsewhere. It had its beginning long

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before the earliest Umbrian artist of whom we have an example in the National Gallery, viz. Piero della Francesca. He was born about 1415, at Borgo San Sepolcro, a town in Tuscany, on the border of Umbria, in the upper valley of the Tiber. He was evidently a man of strong individuality, a lover of nature and knowledge, a searcher after truth, as much a man of science as of art, and of a simple and reverent spirit. Little is known of him but that his real name was Pietro (or Piero) di Benedetto de' Franceschi; that he probably studied under Paolo Uccello; that he worked with Domenico Veneziano, from whom he learnt to paint in oils; that he studied perspective with ardour, and wrote a treatise upon it; that he was one of the first painters of separate portraits, and that he worked in Florence, Arezzo, Urbino, Rimini, San Gemignano, Perugia, Rome, and also his native Borgo San Sepolcro, where he died, blind, on the 12th of October, 1492. In the feeling of his work he is Umbrian, but technically and intellectually he belongs rather to the scientific school of Florence, to the realists and experimentalists of the fifteenth century. A strange mixture of impulses makes his work unusually interesting. In the pictures by which he is

represented in the National Gallery, the naturalistic and experimental sides of him are illustrated very clearly, as well as his great originality. If we compare the "Baptism of Christ in the River Jordan" (No. 665), or "The Nativity of Our Lord" (No. 908), with the similar subjects as treated by his nearest Florentine contemporaries, Fra Lippo Lippi, Benozzo Gozzoli, Pesellino, and Pollaiuolo, we shall find little affinity between him and them. His human types, his colour, his composition, his landscapes, are all his own. We get near to him in the battle-piece of Uccello (some eighteen or nineteen years his senior), where we see the same study of nature for her own sake, the same desire to be simply faithful to appearances, the same effort after correct perspective. He seems to have cast tradition to the winds, and to have begun everything over again from personal observation and study. There is something that reminds one rather of Flanders than Italy in his resolute realism.

In the execution of the "Nativity," which is painted in oil colour, there is also much to suggest Flanders, especially in the folds of the Virgin's dress, and the soft, transparent depth of its colour; and I never look at the picture without thinking

of the famous portrait-piece of Jean Arnolfini and his Wife (No. 186), by John Van Eyck. This is, however, not due to technical similarity alone, but also to a strange (perhaps fanciful) resemblance which strikes me between the face of the Virgin and that of Arnolfini himself.

Of course neither the "Baptism" nor the "Nativity" represents Piero's skill as a painter. They have both grievously suffered at the hands of the cleaner. The "Nativity" was never finished; has been covered with "restorer's" paint, and uncovered again. All that can be said of its present condition is, that what paint there is was nearly all laid on by the hand of Piero. The "Baptism" has suffered even more, and is a mere ghost of what it was, the greater part of it being reduced to the first preparation. That there is anything left of it at all is due only to the careful system of underpainting pursued by the old masters. There are very few modern pictures which, if they had been subjected to the same treatment, would not have disappeared altogether. Even in their ruin these pictures are interesting, in parts very beautiful. An old picture is wonderfully tenacious of life. You may rub it and scrub it, and even daub it, but so much thought and feeling and

THE NATIVITY.—*Piero della Francesca.*

labour have been bestowed upon it, from its beginning to its end, that when the repaintings have been removed, whatever may be left of the original work will be worth seeing and preserving. It is so with these pictures by Piero, scarified though they be. In the first place, the mind of the artist is plainly visible. It is, above all things, a fresh, an unconventional mind. Perhaps the determination of the artist to discard the old formulæ is too strongly asserted. He will do nothing, if he can help it, after the habitual fashion; draw nothing, if he can help it, except from nature. His angels are plainly human—peasant girls of the Apennines, probably—firm on their feet, with sturdy legs and ankles. Instead of the nimbus they are crowned with wreaths of flowers. In the whole conception of the scene he has tried to be as true as possible to the facts he knew. The solemn event takes place in an Italian valley, watered with a small stream, probably suggested by some tributary of the Tiber. The study of natural phenomena is everywhere apparent. The pomegranate trees are the earliest attempt in the National Gallery to give what may be called the portrait of a particular tree—the habit of its growth, the special character of its leafage. The

hedge in Uccello's "Battle of St. Egidio" is the nearest approach to it. He has striven to imagine the scene as it actually might have happened. He has introduced human spectators. A man about to bathe is vigorously drawing off his shirt. Sundry worthies, in strange, rich costumes, look on from a farther bank. Nothing is "newer" in the picture than the carefully studied reflections of their garments in the water. The effect, so beautifully rendered by Sir E. Burne-Jones in his picture of "Venus's Looking Glass," Piero was the first to paint, if not to observe.*

When we turn to the "Nativity," we find other, and perhaps greater, departures from the orthodox style and treatment. The angels are again without "glories," and have not even wreaths of flowers, nor have they wings; the hair of some flows unadorned and unconfined, others bear a strange little jewel on the top of the head. So also does the Virgin, who, no longer dressed in the usual vestments of red and blue, wears a closely fitting blue-grey dress, very plain in cut, though ornamented with pearls; her mantle of very rich dark blue, has fallen, and clings to the skirt like a train. Nothing is more remarkable in Piero's work than his

* It was also observed and painted by Signorelli.

preference for blue, as a prevalent colour of masses —now pale as lavender and shot with warm colour, like a pigeon's neck; now of the deepest, richest purple. No other Italian artist resembles him in this. He seems to have tried and succeeded in resolving much the same problem as Gainsborough in his "Blue Boy." As I have elsewhere pointed out, this picture shows everywhere "the result of personal study, and victory, though imperfect, over difficulties. Study of perspective we see in the drawing of the shed and of the town on the right, with the complication of roofs all carefully worked out, and, on the left, in its valley and mountains, wound about with river and dotted with trees. Study of light and shade, in the shadow of the roof and broken wall in the back of the shed, in the reflection of trees in the river, and the illumination of the figures. Study of animals in the ass braying, in the magpie on the roof and the finches in the bush." Nor is this realistic observation confined to the inanimate objects and animals; the posture (somewhat uncouth, but very natural) of Joseph, the mouths and hands of the angels singing and playing, the simple, devout attitude of the kneeling Virgin, the lively gestures of the Child—are all alike instances of the most careful

and personal study from nature direct. Yet, with all this strong scientific and professional interest apparent thoughout the work; with all this abandonment of symbolic and mystical apparatus to aid the impression of super-naturalism, the picture is pervaded by a remarkable reverence of sentiment. The artist has pressed all his knowledge and experimental ardour into the service of his religion. The hand is the hand of Uccello, but the voice is the voice of Fra Angelico.

Of the two portraits ascribed to Piero, that said to be of Isotta da Rimini (No. 585) has the greater resemblance to other profile portraits ascribed to Piero, but it is not worthy of him, and No 758, notwithstanding its inferior condition, has a far greater distinction. Dr. Richter is inclined, apparently, to ascribe the latter to Uccello. Both pictures (whoever painted them) are interesting for their costume, for their shaved foreheads and headdresses, for the ornaments on their sleeves; and No. 758 is another instance of the almost imperishable beauty of a once fine picture of the period. The lady is said to have been a Contessa Palma, of Urbino, but, whoever she was, she was no common person. Her face, even in this defaced image, though not beautiful or pleasant, retains a subtle

fascination, for which it is hard to account. It is probably the earliest (separate) Italian portrait in the Gallery.

In the interesting triptych, "The Crucifixion, etc." (No. 1107), by Niccolo da Foligno, or Fuligno (1430?–1492?), we have a well-preserved example of another Umbrian artist, who evidently studied landscape directly from nature, and was greatly indebted to a Florentine painter for his training. It cannot be said that these pictures bear such strong traces of the influences of Benozzo Gozzoli, as Piero's of Uccello; but Niccolo's early works are said to teem with reminiscences of Benozzo, who, between 1452 and 1457, was working not far from Foligno. In this picture we are reminded not only of him and his master Fra Angelico, but also of a still earlier and less advanced art, when fuller rein was given to the physical expression of suffering. To this earlier and more barbaric art, belong the frantic angels catching the blood flowing from the wound of Christ, and the unrestrained agony of the figures at the foot of the cross. The convulsed limbs and distorted features impair for us the solemnity and dignity of the conception; but the treatment was no doubt better suited to the feeling of the uneducated country folk,

for whose edification the picture was designed. No artist, perhaps, except Botticelli, has ever been able to render such highly pitched emotion without overleaping into bathos; but with him passion, however intense, is never allowed to get the mastery, and end in a pitiful breakdown of the body. Yet there is much to admire in the vigour and sincerity with which the scene of the Crucifixion is conceived, and the figure of S. Francis, kneeling with his face concealed at the foot of the cross, touches us much more deeply than all the unveiled agonies of the rest. In the pictures at the sides, the brutality of the crowd on the road to Calvary, and the coarse conception of the Apostles in the Garden of Gethsemane (one of whom is evidently snoring), may be due to the lingering of unrefined tradition in a country town; but, on the other hand, there are marked signs of advance and of personal observation, especially in the varied and vigorous landscapes. The artist has evidently gone to nature for his sky as well as for his trees, and, what, historically, is perhaps the most interesting feature in the triptych, for his sea also. Twice over we look at it. Once, in the distance of the central panel behind the Crucifixion. Here it is green, true sea-green, with ships upon

THE VIRGIN ADORING THE INFANT CHRIST.—*Perugino.*

it moving with the wind. Is it the Adriatic or the Mediterranean? From its colour, probably the former, studied by the artist from some slope of the Apennines. Again, in the background of the Pietà, on the right side. Here it is deep blue. These are not only the first but almost the last glimpses of the sea that we shall catch in any picture by an Italian artist in the National Gallery. In spite of this, however, Niccolo cannot be regarded as so original a master as Piero della Francesca. In the main he was a follower of the older style, the older feeling, without any great individuality or merit of his own; but he is interesting because he seems to stand midway between the art of Florence, as represented in the works of his master Benozzo Gozzoli, and the art of Umbria, as developed by his pupil Perugino. The honour of teaching Perugino is also claimed for Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, who, as is evident from his picture here, was a follower, if not a disciple, of Benozzo. This altar-piece, "The Virgin and Child with Saints and Angels" (No. 1103), should be compared with Benozzo's "The Virgin enthroned, etc." (No. 283). The Virgin and the angels are of a very different type, and have that tendency to affectation which we find in Umbrian

artists of the second rank, and from which even the best are not quite free; the angels are quite supercilious. Umbrian also is the supplicating sentiment of S. Francis on the left, and S. Bernardino of Siena on the right. The little "donor," so humble in scale and so curiously squeezed in between them, is the earliest instance in the National Gallery of a portrait introduced into such a composition, though the practice commenced long before this picture was painted. The highly arched eyebrows of the Virgin and the angels, the pointed eyes and upturned thumbs, the puckered sleeves and short legs, are highly characteristic of this vigorous and tender, if not very great master. One of the wings of the triptych has been lost, and the other has been divided so as to give the central panel a saint on each side. There is a superficial resemblance between this picture and another which hangs near it, representing "The Mystic Marriage of S. Catherine' (No. 249). Of the artist, who signs himself LAURENTIUS II. SEVERINAS, nothing is known, except that he probably painted some frescoes, which still exist at Pausolo near Macerata and in a church at Sarnano; but he is presumed to have belonged to the same family as Lorenzo and Jacopo da San

Severino, who, in the year 1416, were at work in the Oratory of San Giovanni at Urbino. This charming altar-piece belongs apparently to the latter half of the fifteenth century, and the artist was probably the son of the elder Lorenzo, and nearer in age to Signorelli and Perugino, than to their forerunners Niccolo da Foligno and Fiorenzo di Lorenzo. In the midst of much uncertainty, it is clear, at least, that this Lorenzo the second was an artist of no ordinary mind or skill. The picture is thoroughly fresh and unaffected, the colour lively and uncommon. The face of S. Catherine is sweet, and the expression of the Child as he places the ring on her finger is natural and pleasant; while the Virgin presides, as it were, over the ceremony with a graceful cordiality, as though she rejoiced at the honour conferred upon the saint. The artist, not content with the distinction of her Dominican robes, has made it clear by an inscription on the nimbus that it is not S. Catherine of Alexandria who is the bride of Christ, but S. Catherine of Siena. The legend of the mystic marriage belongs to both saints; but as the canonised Queen of Alexandria lived in the fourth century, if she ever lived at all, and the lady of Siena in the fourteenth, it is possible that it was first told of the former.

In Borgognone's delightful picture of the Marriage (No. 298, in Room IX.), both are present, and the infant Christ has a ring for each.*

Niccolo da Foligno, Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, and Lorenzo the second of Severino, were all interesting artists; but they were not great ones. Notwithstanding a certain personality which distinguishes them from the herd, they followed rather than led The great leaders of Umbrian art in the fifteenth century, were Piero della Francesca, Melozzo da Forli, Signorelli, and Perugino. Fortunately, of all these men the National Gallery contains examples—genuine, characteristic, and of the finest quality. Of Piero we have spoken, of Melozzo da Forli it is difficult to speak much, so little is known of him, so few are his remaining works; but the specimens of his skill which we possess, if not very interesting in their subjects, attest very plainly his extraordinary merit as a painter and a master of decorative design. No Umbrian works in the National Gallery present more clearly the culture of the time than these simple panels, which were painted to adorn the palace of Federigo, the good Duke of Urbino and Montefeltro. They are supposed to represent

* See p. 278.

Music and Rhetoric, and formed part of a series of seven pictures, two of which are at Berlin, and another (which was exhibited last winter at the Royal Academy) in the possession of the Queen. The last contains portraits of Federigo and his son Guidobaldo, who succeeded Federigo as a Duke, and also as a munificent patron of art and letters. The masterly freedom with which these figures and their accessories are painted show that this artist, who was born in 1438, was much in advance of his time. They are supposed to have been executed about the year 1480, when his powers were probably at their fullest. It will be seen that the steps and the figures thereon are drawn in perspective, as if they were real objects seen from below, and they present the earliest example the Gallery possesses of this kind of perspective illusion, which was practised with great success by Mantegna, and carried out on the grandest scale by Michael Angelo in the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

Melozzo's skill in perspective is celebrated by Giovanni Santi, the father of Raphael, in that very interesting poem commemorating the deeds of Duke Federigo, which is still preserved in the Vatican. Santi is said to have been the pupil of

Melozzo, though there is little trace in his timid work of the large manner of his reputed master. We have one example of him, the "Madonna and Child" (No. 751), which shows tenderness and refinement, but little power or originality. His best works are at Urbino, and one of them, a fresco (on the wall of his own house, still standing) of the Virgin reading, with the Child asleep on her lap (or, as others think, of his wife and infant son), is almost worthy of Raphael himself, who was born there in 1483. Despite his moderate accomplishment as a painter, Giovanni Santi is an interesting figure in the history of Umbrian art. It was at his house that Piero della Francesca was lodged when he visited Urbino in 1469, at the invitation of the Brotherhood of Corpus Domini; he had probably met Paolo Uccello, who was painting at Urbino in the previous year; he had met Mantegna at Mantua and studied his works there. His poem, or rhymed chronicle, before referred to, shows that he had a sound appreciation of all the great artists of Florence and Umbria, Padua and Venice, sculptors as well as painters. He was on affectionate terms with Melozzo. Among other artists, he was probably very well acquainted with Perugino, whom he

calls a divine painter, and also with Signorelli. The latter's direction in art lay outside the principal path of Umbrian art, which led through valleys of peace, from Fra Angelico to Raphael —the path of grace, of tender sentiment and religious aspiration. He chose the sterner, and (though he was Umbrian) it may be said the more Florentine, road, from Pollaiuolo to Michael Angelo—the road of vigour and dramatic action, and the majesty of the human body. It is at all events to Perugino we turn, if we wish to see the purest flower of Umbrian art, purer even than Raphael, for Perugino, though he studied at Florence and elsewhere, remained always true to his earliest ideals, and devoted himself to perfect that expression of contemplative ecstasy which is perhaps the supreme achievement of his school.

We are fortunate in possessing what is almost unanimously allowed to be the masterpiece of Pietro Vannucci, commonly called Perugino. This is the triptych (No. 288), "The Virgin adoring the Infant Christ," with the Archangel Michael on the left, and the Archangel Raphael and Tobias on the right. It was painted for the Certosa at Pavia. It formed the principal portion

of an altar-piece originally consisting of six portions, of which two have disappeared, and the other, a figure of God the Father, is still in its original place. It was commissioned in 1496, and probably finished in 1500, so that there is little ground for believing, as was once supposed, that Raphael, who was, in the latter year, about seventeen years old, and probably not yet his pupil, rendered any assistance in its design or execution. Perugino was born in 1446, and was therefore fifty years old, and at the very culmination of his powers, when he received the commission. If we trust all the traditions, no artist received instruction from so many masters. It is a testimony to his excellence and also to his originality, that Niccolo da Foligno, Piero della Francesca, Benedetto Bonfigli, and Fiorenzo di Lorenzo have all been named as his teachers.

We are told also by Vasari that he studied under Verrocchio at Florence. But in his case, as in the case of his great contemporary Signorelli, his own genius obliterated nearly all traces of tutelage. Even in the simple and early work of his (No. 181), "The Virgin and Infant Christ with S. John," there is no distinct sign of the influence of any particular master, and in the two

later works of his that we possess it is himself alone that we see. As it hangs here, surrounded by the works of his predecessors, his contemporaries and pupils (including Raphael himself), the beautiful triptych (No. 288) proclaims the complete individuality of its painter and his distinction as a colourist, a landscape-painter, and a master of religious sentiment. A charm of sacred peace broods on the whole composition, descends from its pure blue sky, spreads over the lovely background of hill and tree and lake and river, and inspires angels, archangels, Virgin, and even Tobit with a calm rapture, as though they were all listening to some strain of celestial music. The unusual fulness and richness of its colour suggests that of Venice rather than of Florence or Umbria, and it is at least worth notice in connection with this unwonted scale of chromatic harmony, that the painter had visited Venice in 1494, and had there, according to Messrs. Crowe and Calvalcaselle, completed his mastery over painting in oil—a method which he carried, as seen in this picture, to a greater perfection than any contemporary of his school.*

* A still larger picture by this master has now been added, a fresco, said to be the last of his works, and also a small "Baptism of Christ" (No. 1431), of the finest quality.

If the other large picture by Perugino, "The Virgin and Child with S. Jerome and S. Francis" (No. 1075), does not display all the powers of his prime, it is as characteristic and almost as interesting as the altar-piece from Pavia. In his old age the popularity of Perugino did not decrease, nor yet his activity. He undertook a large number of works here and there, in the execution of which he was largely helped by assistants. The successful manufacturer of pictures took, to a great extent, the place of the great artist, and it is therefore only a few of his later works in which we see the old fire of his genius. Fortunately these remarks do not apply to No. 1075. The picture itself tells us plainly that it was not only designed but executed by his own hand, and, if we had any doubt on the subject, it would be removed by the testimony of the original contract for the picture, a copy of which is printed in the official catalogue. From this source we also learn that the picture was executed between June and September in the year 1507, when the artist was sixty-one, for a chapel in S. Maria Nuova (de Servi) at Perugia. The contract is very similar to that for the altar-piece by Benozzo Gozzoli (No. 283), full of exact

stipulations as to subject and treatment, showing that even in the sixteenth century the church painter at least had often very little room in which to exercise any fancy he might possess. But by this time the fancy of Perugino was pretty well worn out; the ardour with which he had designed his frescoes in the Sistine Chapel some five and twenty years before had given place to a contented exercise of acknowledged mastery; that long-sustained effort to conquer all the difficulties of his profession, which made him still a student when he went to Venice in 1494, had been relaxed, and his mature and mellow genius half forgot the lessons of his youth and indulged in repetition and mannerisms, reverting, it may be said, to the crudities of his earlier style. So we find in this picture the Madonna and Child somewhat prim and insipid, the forms less close to nature, the angels stiff and conventional, the landscape loose and vague. But with all this we find a suppleness of touch and golden glory of suffused colour which compensate for what is lost. Not even in the Pavia altar-piece is the peculiar virtue and true mastery of Perugino more clearly shown than in this work of his later age, which glows as if the whole air was woven of golden light.

The pictures of Perugino are * particularly well hung for study in relation to those of his pupils and assistants, Manni, Pinturricchio, Andrea di Luigi, Lo Spagna, and Raphael, though our examples of these artists are not of any high interest, except in the case of Raphael. Of the greatness of Pinturricchio the gallery presents no idea. The best of the works attributed to him is the "S. Catherine of Alexandria" (No. 693), but that is less interesting in connection with Perugino than with Raphael, to whose beautiful representation of the same subject it hangs close. The fresco from the Pandolfo Petrucci Palace at Siena (No. 911) is interesting and amusing, but it shows him attempting a class of art for which he had no distinct vocation, while the series from the Story of Griselda (Nos. 912–914), though they are also interesting and amusing, are clearly not by his hand, nor even by an imitator of his style. The very considerable painter of the frescoes in the Library of Siena is therefore not only not well represented, but is misrepresented in our Gallery. The example of Lo Spagna, "The Agony in the

* Or rather "were." At present the room is invaded by a huge screen, which divides Perugino from Raphael, and there is no knowing how the pictures will be hung when this book is published.

Garden" (No. 1032), has great merit in execution, and was once ascribed to Raphael, but it is evident that its design owes so much to Perugino as to leave little credit to his pupil. The figure of the leading soldier is taken from his master's figure of S. Michael in our triptych, a figure which is specially characteristic of Perugino, who, exquisite as he was in rendering the tenderer feelings of the soul, could imagine the conqueror of Satan only as an effeminate youth with dandy armour and a good deal of swagger. Compare him with the famous statue of S. George by Donatello at Florence or the S. Michael of Spinello in the fresco here, and we see clearly the difference between what may called the male and female types of artist. Something between the two is the S. William of Ercole di Giulio Grandi (No. 1119), a picture which is also interesting in connection with the school of Perugino for the similarity which exists between the figure of the Baptist and that in Raphael's "Madonna degli Ansidei" (No. 1171).

CHAPTER VI.

THE HUMAN FORM DIVINE.

THERE are few more agreeable or interesting portraits in the National Gallery than No. 895, "Portrait of a Warrior in Armour," with a view of the Piazza della Signoria, Florence, in the background, by Piero di Cosimo, the painter of the pathetic and romantic "Death of Procris" (No. 698), of which I have already said something in my third chapter—"The Shore of Romance." Mr. Austin Dobson, whose sense of art is scarcely less true than his literary touch, has made the latter the subject of a charming poem. "Oh, the pity of it!" seems to say the little wild faun of the woods, as he gently lays his hand upon the shoulder of Procris, and watches the life-blood flow from the delicate young body, while her faithful hound looks on with a profounder—may we not say, a more human?—sorrow. How romantic and full of interest is the blue landscape, with its lake,

resembling, I am told, Lake Thrasymene, its strange fresh-water plants, and its birds—including a pelican, whose bag glows red—an effect which you may see on any sunny day in the Zoological Gardens! This strange whimsical painter, of whom George Eliot has introduced so picturesque a study in her romance of "Romola," is singularly well represented in the National Gallery by this masterpiece of his poetic imagination and the portrait of the gentleman in armour, whose kind, intelligent face seems to contradict the sternness of his apparel. It is difficult not to think that Piero had something more than a professional interest in his sitter, and endeavoured to present a lively and faithful image of a familiar friend. As in "The Death of Procis," the background is of unusual interest, for it gives an authentic picture of the Piazza della Signoria as it appeared in the early years of the sixteenth century, not before 1504, for Michael Angelo's statue of "David," which we see in the picture, had not been placed in its first site before that year, and not after 1521, in which year the painter's death took place. We see here the Palazzo Pubblico, and the Marzocco, and the Statue of David, and the Loggia de' Lanzi, then

used as a shelter for the famous Florentine Corps, and not as now encumbered with statuary. Not least to be remarked in this picture is the skill with which the distant street is rendered, with its study of light and broken touch. But we are in the sixteenth century now; Botticelli, Ghirlandajo, and Mantegna are dead or dying, Leonardo da Vinci is over fifty years old, Signorelli and Perugino are older still, Michael Angelo has astonished the world with his "David," and the young Raphael has painted, or is shortly about to paint, the "Madonna degli Ansidei" (No. 1171).

Andrea del Sarto, who painted the beautiful portrait No. 690, once supposed to be his own, was the pupil of Piero, but went far beyond his master in grace and technical skill. The cool, sweet colour of the picture, and its silvery tone, distinguish it from all its surroundings, and the contrast is increased by its free but sure handling, the soft modulations of the flesh, and the broad scheme of chiaroscuro, which now begins to take its place as a prominent element in the composition of a picture. It was from Leonardo da Vinci that he learnt, perhaps, so to merge the lights into the shadows by subtle gradations, that the point of fusion is imperceptible, and outlines are lost

PORTRAIT.—*Andrea del Sarto.*

without destroying either shape or substance; but it is doubtful whether Leonardo himself ever succeeded so well in rendering the shadowed softness of nature as Andrea does in this picture. It is not fair to compare it in this respect with Leonardo's exquisite "Madonna of the Rocks," where the lighting is evidently arbitrary and artificial; for the bent of Leonardo's mind was more experimental than impulsive, his aim rather the definition of form than truth of illumination. He had more of the sculptor in his composition than Andrea del Sarto, but less of the painter. Both of them, however, attempted to resolve the same physical difficulties of their art; both, in their portraits, were interested, not only in the bodies, but in the minds of their sitters.

Whoever this handsome melancholy man may have been, he, in Andrea's portrait, at once engages our interest in him, and his character, and his lot in the world. It is a face with a history. It is, moreover, a face which fits in so well with the traditions of Andrea del Sarto, the weak man with the beautiful, wilful wife, the perfect artistic temperament, the man of finest impulses cursed by fate, the being, indeed, as drawn for us in Browning's famous poem, that it is not without a

struggle that one gives up the cherished notion that this is not his own presentation of himself. At all events it is an exquisite picture, and thoroughly characteristic of the master. It is conjectured that it may be a portrait of a sculptor, and that the curious block which he holds in his sensitive hands is a brick of modelling clay. One other picture ascribed to this artist (No. 17), "The Holy Family," is much damaged, and its authenticity has been much disputed. It is possibly by one of his pupils, from the picture now at the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, which contains other figures. At least it is his in design and character, especially in the laughing Christ and the type of the Virgin, which is also something of the type of Lucrezia del Fede, the wife whom he married to his sorrow.

We may now be said to have reached the highest point of Florentine art, for Andrea del Sarto (1486–1531) was the last of the great painters of Florence, younger by thirty-four years than Leonardo da Vinci, eleven years the junior of Michael Angelo, both of whom greatly advanced the development of his genius. Like both these artists his precocity was extraordinary; for he was scarcely twenty when he commenced the

famous frescoes in the court of S. Annunziata at Florence, which would alone suffice to raise his fame, if not to the level of these artists, at least above nearly all the rest of his generation. Those who have the greatest claims to dispute his place are Fra Bartolommeo and Albertinelli. Of the former the National Gallery possesses no example, of the latter it has only one very small work, "The Virgin and Child" (No. 645). Fortunately these deficiencies are not of great importance in connection with Andrea del Sarto, who gained his inspiration from greater men, and whose perfect perception of the natural graces and unaffected charms of human beauty, whose fine but simple style and personal feeling for colour, were born in himself. Though his genius, despite our beautiful portrait, is scarcely felt in our Gallery, yet this work distinguishes him by perhaps his most essential characteristics, as the most purely artistic and the most simply human of the great painters of Florence. He was neither a philosopher nor a devotee, a scientist nor a scholar, but only a painter and a man. If we add that he was a great painter but not a great man, we shall get a rough approximation to a true estimate of him. There are, however, few personalities more

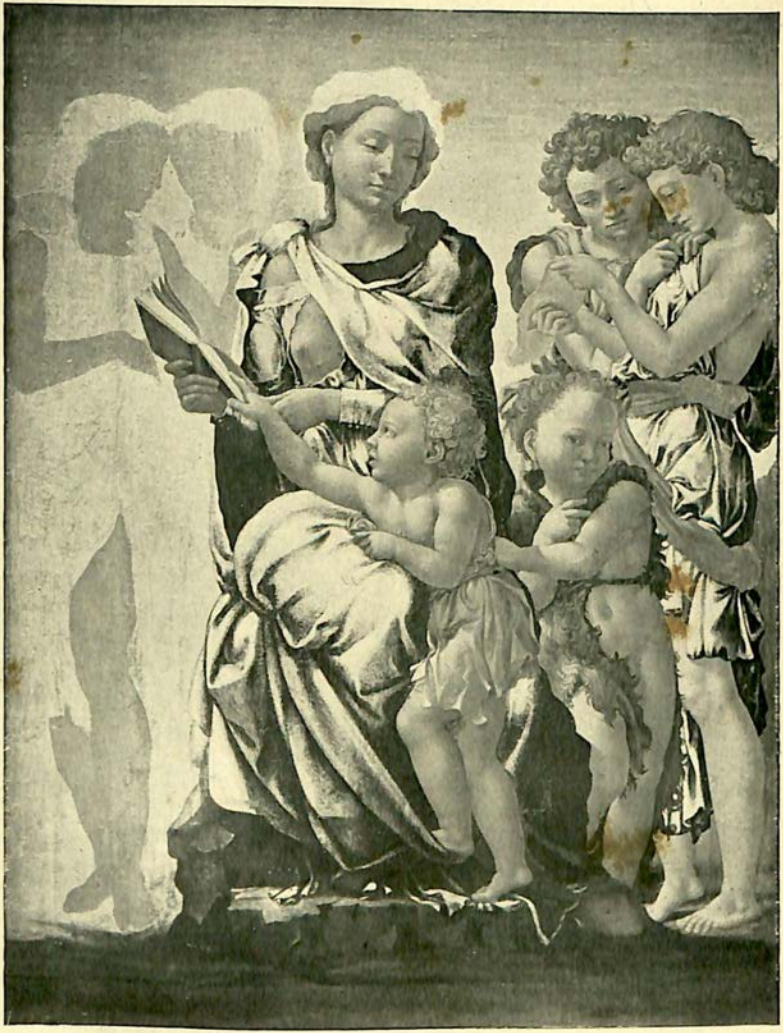
fascinating than his, and there are few greater pleasures in the National Gallery than to trace the links which attach him more or less remotely to other artists. The chain, indeed, is fairly complete. We have his master Piero di Cosimo, and Piero's master Cosimo Rosselli;* we have his friend and fellow-worker Francia Bigio, his pupils Pontormo and "Il Bacchiaca," and Pontormo's pupil Bronzino. We have, besides, works by the men who most influenced him, Ghirlandajo, and Michael Angelo, and Leonardo da Vinci, and, more interesting perhaps than all this, three by "Il Bacchiaca" and Pontormo, which formed part of a series of decorations for a bridal chamber, upon which he himself was also engaged. We have already begun with his master, and so to speak his *great*-master; let us go on with these artists, without whose example and fructifying influence he could never have grown to his full height. His relation to Ghirlandajo, indeed, judged by his pictures, appears rather one of contrast than affinity. We only see the advance he made in technique, and his freer sympathy with human character. To appreciate how much he learnt of stately composition from Ghirlandajo,

* At least according to the Catalogue.

how he carried on, with even greater realism, if not with equal dignity, the representation of the greater events of Biblical history as if they had been transacted in the spacious dwellings of the Renaissance, we must go to Florence and study such frescoes as the "Birth of the Virgin" in S. Annunziata. With Leonardo da Vinci we see a greater affinity, as has already been pointed out, in the light and shade and the perfection of relief by subtle gradation of tones from high light to low shadow. But, though in respect of beauty of colour and truth of illumination, and perhaps some other points, Andrea del Sarto may bear a comparison with this true giant among men and artists, in intellectual power, in intensity of feeling and perception, in varied originality and profound knowledge, he was greatly his inferior. We do not need to compare the "Last Supper" of Leonardo at Milan, with that of Andrea del Sarto at S. Salvi near Florence, to see this; our "Virgin of the Rocks" breathes a mysterious and ineffable charm, of which neither Andrea nor any other has ever caught the secret. If the execution is not wholly—or, as some are inclined to think, even at all—by his hand, the wonder is even greater. There is, however, no reason to doubt

that this picture was executed under the direction of the artist for the Church of S. Francesco at Milan, and that a great portion of it, including the incomparable heads, were painted as well as designed by Leonardo. The execution throughout is not equal; the halos are of later date; but on the whole it and its rival in the Louvre may be regarded as the finest existing pictures * by the master; for though even from the ruins of the "Last Supper" there still emanates a finer spirit than from any of the many copies of it, it can scarcely be said to exist. It is, however, well worth a visit to the Gallery of the Royal Academy to see the copy made by his pupil Marco d'Oggiono, and there they will also find the much-damaged but still exquisite cartoon for the altar-piece of the Servi at Florence which Leonardo undertook about 1500, but never executed. This, as well as his famous cartoon of the "Battle of Anghiari," executed at the same

* This is not the place to discuss the rival claims of the two pictures, which have been the subject of much controversy, especially between Dr. J. P. Richter and Mr. Poynter in the pages of the *Art Journal*, but I believe that our picture was the original one, and was far advanced by the artist himself, but that the execution of it was delayed or abandoned by the artist in order to paint that which is now in the Louvre, and that ours was afterwards completed by another hand.



THE MADONNA AND INFANT CHRIST.—*Michael Angelo.*

time as Michael Angelo's cartoon of another incident in the Pisan campaign (generally called the Cartoon of Pisa), must have had no little effect in developing the genius of Andrea del Sarto.

The influence of Michael Angelo on Andrea del Sarto was as great, if not greater, than that of Leonardo, though it cannot be directly traced in our Gallery, as the only pictures by Michael Angelo that we possess—and we are exceptionally fortunate in possessing them—are two unfinished and very early works, one of which has been supposed to have been commenced when he was still an apprentice of Ghirlandajo, that is between the ages of thirteen and sixteen. This is "The Madonna and Infant Christ, S. John the Baptist, and Angels," No. 809, and was formerly ascribed to Ghirlandajo himself. It is now generally acknowledged as a very early work of Michael Angelo; but, early as it is, it shows a grasp of the human figure, a sense of the harmonious beauty of its organization as a whole, and the expressiveness of its parts from the head to the toes, which goes beyond his master. The noble purity of the types, the fine but firm rhythm of the lines, the depth but restraint of the expression, the careful

modelling, all betray the mind of the future sculptor, who was so to master the knowledge of the human body, that he could use it as freely as a native language to express his grandest ideas. The other picture, "The Entombment of our Lord" (No. 790), is no doubt a later work, sterner in subject and in treatment, abjuring grace and beauty, still more anatomical and sculpturesque in modelling, but with a strange if uncouth grandeur, a solemn music of concerted action, a profound pathos of helplessness in the dead body,—yet withal a failure to reach the artist's ideal, and abandoned probably for that reason. The state of unfinish in which both these works were left, though to be regretted, gives much interesting evidence of the manner in which painters proceeded in the execution of their works. The ground for the draperies we see was laid in white, that for the flesh in green, a manner traditional from the very earliest days of Italian painting. When this was not understood, the early painters were ridiculed for their "green Madonnas," pictures in which the over-painting had been cleaned off, or the ground had, as is its tendency, worked its way to the surface. In many well-preserved pictures in the National Gallery this silent change

has taken place; in the Fra Angelico for instance, and in the Duccio, which is perhaps the "greenest" Madonna which we have. It is to be observed that this green ground, at least in the case of Michael Angelo, was no mere flat preparation, for the legs of the angel on the right have careful indications of modelling—a proof, if one were needed, that the green under-painting was used for the shading of the flesh, by the application of more or less thin paintings of flesh colour over it. The difficulty of deciding in some instances whether pictures of this time were painted in tempera or in oil colour is well illustrated by these pictures. There have been heated discussions on this point with regard to the "Entombment," some asserting it was an oil picture, others a tempera. There is no doubt that the ground is tempera, and the latest opinion, as expressed in the Official Catalogue, is that "it is partly, *if not entirely*, painted in tempera." It seems that the greatest difficulty in the introduction of oil painting was to find an oil medium which would unite with a tempera ground. Why it was so long before any one thought of starting with an oil ground for an oil picture is one of the mysteries in the evolution of ideas.

From Florence to Umbria was the usual road of art. The only very palpable instance in which the direction was contradicted was that of Signorelli, and he was not strictly Umbrian born, and his master, Piero della Francesca, worked under a strong influence from the Florentine Uccello. There can be no doubt that Signorelli learnt a good deal from Piero della Francesca. He learnt to observe nature; he learnt to take his models from the neighbouring peasantry; he learnt, among other useful things, the beauty of reflection of colour in water: but though, in his earlier works, traces of imitation of Piero may be found (as, for instance, in two fragments of a Baptism in the possession of Sir Francis Cook), his mind was of a very different temper. In the works by him in the National Gallery we shall find little to remind us of Piero, still less of Fiorenzo di Lorenzo, with whom he is also said to have studied. Nor, on the other hand, shall we find, except in the damaged fresco from the Pandolpho Petrucci palace at Siena, any example of that action, strong even to violence, which was one of his chief characteristics, nor of his power of drawing the nude figure. It has been said by no less an authority than Sir Frederick Burton, that to him

THE CIRCUMCISION.—*Signorelli*

"is due the inauguration of the study of the human form for its own sake." This perhaps needs some modification in favour of such men as Antonio Pollaiuolo and Mantegna, but he certainly advanced such study farther than any of his predecessors, and was the true precursor of Michael Angelo, who, as is well known, appropriated some of the figures in Signorelli's wonderful frescoes in the cathedral at Orvieto for his own "Last Judgment" in the Sistine Chapel. Of the foreground figures in the fresco of "The Triumph of Chastity" (No. 910), there is little left except their somewhat excessive vigour; but one of the figures on the left in type and feeling greatly resembles one of those in "The Circumcision." The groups in the background are better preserved, and are characteristic of his treatment of animated action. In his other works here, "The Circumcision" (No. 1128) and "The Nativity" (No. 1133), there is, from the nature of the subjects, small scope for excited movement; but the former is a masterpièce, and, with the exception of the child, evidently by the master's own hand. It is the earliest work in the Gallery which seems painted with a full sweep of the arm and a full brush. Nor is the breadth and the swiftness of the

handling accompanied by coarseness or insufficiency. The grandeur of the women is not more pronounced than their refinement and grace. The whole scene is conceived and sustained at a high level of serious interest, with which the strong sonorous colour, the stately richness of the architecture, the grand grouping of the figures, and the intense but silent expression of the heads are all in tune. Notwithstanding that the Child has been repainted by another hand, we have no picture in the National Gallery which more truly represents a great artist at his best and noblest, and it would not be going too far to say that it is one of the masterpieces, not only of Signorelli, but of the world. The nature of the subject, of course, forbids the treatment of the body "purely for its own sake," but though all his figures are draped and permeated with the feeling of a solemn function, the majesty and rhythmic beauty of the "human form divine" break, as it were, through the clothes. The other large altar-piece, "The Nativity," is also a grand witness to his genius, if it be not altogether by his hand. The fine drawing by him in the Malcolm Collection, now on exhibition at the British Museum,* is a complete

* Since acquired for the Museum with the rest of the Malcolm Collection.

proof that the noble realistic figures of the peasants—realistic, but in the case of the standing youth, classic also—are of his own design, and the prominent manner in which the picture is signed shows that he was content to acknowledge it as his own. But it is difficult to believe that the painter of "The Circumcision" could be altogether responsible for the simpering Madonna and the affected angels, to say nothing of the wooden little infant on the cushion. On the other hand, the execution of the picture as a whole, if somewhat coarse and rugged, is thoroughly strong and determined. Whether, however, he painted the work himself or left it to his pupils, its merit and interest are incontestable. Possibly the "passing" of the Virgin, angels, and Child—if he did not paint them himself—was partly due to a lack of sensitiveness to emotion which is below the heroic pitch, or can only be touched by subjective expression. In his weakness, as in his strength, he affords a complete contrast to Perugino: to Piero della Francesca, his master, also; and the comparison can be made effectually here, as we have a "Nativity" by each hung side by side. How much more delightful are Piero's angels and Child, how infinitely finer Signorelli's shepherds

and S. Joseph. One prominent and curious feature of the Signorelli is the classic-temple-like building in the middle distance, on the frieze of which is the painter's name. This must surely be meant for the inn, and by crowding its portico with figures, the artist has shown us that there was "no room" in it for the Holy Family.

When we remember that Signorelli was senior to Botticelli and Ghirlandajo, to Leonardo da Vinci (by about ten years), and to Michael Angelo (by a whole generation), one better appreciates the strength and originality of his genius, and the influence he must have exerted not only over the Umbrian School, but the whole of the art of Central Italy. He, as I have said, left the Fra Angelico path of tender sentiment for a more virile and robust road, which led to Michael Angelo, and the complete restoration of the human form to its true artistic supremacy as the standard of beauty, the noblest vehicle for thought. It was a strange chance that selected him to complete the frescoes in the cathedral at Orvieto, which had been committed to Angelico half a century before. As might be expected, whatever remains of the gentle Brother's work, is completely overwhelmed by the Titanic force of Signorelli's conceptions,

which are scarcely less important in the history of Italian art than the frescoes of Masaccio in the Carmine at Florence. If we pair Signorelli with Michael Angelo, we may pair Masaccio with Raphael, and, looked upon in this light, the balance of account between Florence and Umbria seems fairly even.

Though Andrea del Sarto was distinctly on the gentler side, he was decidedly influenced by Michael Angelo, as may be seen in his beautiful group of "Charity," and other frescoes executed by him in the cortile of the Scalzi at Florence. In these works he was associated with his great friend, Francia Bigio (1482-1524), the pupil of Albertinelli. The sympathy between the two artists Andrea and Bigio is illustrated in the National Gallery by the two portraits (Nos. 690 and 1035). The latter's "Portrait of a Young Man" with the cross of Malta on his breast, although darkened by time, is a good example of his refined feeling in protraiture. Belonging to the same group were two other artists who were born and died in the same years, Jacopo da Pontormo (1494-1557), and Francesco Ubertini ("Il Bacchiaca") (1494-1557). The three were friends of each other and of Andrea del Sarto,

and all were engaged, in company with another artist, Granacci, to decorate the nuptial chamber of Pier Francesco Borgherini and his bride, Margherita Acciaiuoli, in their palace at Florence. The painted panels which they executed, as far as they are known to us, all represent scenes from the history of Joseph, conceived in that free spirit of fancy which is characteristic of the time. Two of them, by Andrea del Sarto, are in the Uffizzi at Florence, and here we have one by Pontormo, and two by Ubertini. The Pontormo (No. 1131) is, as was first pointed out by Dr. Richter, a picture specially described by Vasari as "the best work ever performed in his whole life by this artist," and it is fortunately extremely well preserved. Vasari justly praises "the power of invention displayed, the grouping of the figures, the animation of the heads," and "the variety and beauty of the attitudes." The influence of Andrea del Sarto is plainly visible in this picture, in both the colour and the spirited grace of the children; and that of Michael Angelo no less in the freedom and variety of the gestures and the dignity of the elder figures. The picture is also another link to another generation of painters, for Vasari has informed us that the little boy with a cap, seated on the steps, is a

portrait of the afterwards celebrated painter Bronzino, who was a pupil of Pontormo. Not far off hangs one of Bronzino's fine portraits, "A Knight of S. Stefano" (No. 670), and beside it, on the other side, the charming "Portrait of a Boy" (No. 649), which is ascribed to Pontormo himself.

Ubertini's gaily coloured and vivacious panels will be found in the Umbrian Room (V.), and are striking for their fresh preservation and the brilliant variety of their fanciful costumes, which belong to the painter's day and country, with the exception of a few items in the way of Roman helmet and Oriental turban. The often-repeated figure of little Benjamin, in his blue gown, strikes a pleasant note of simplicity among the motley and elaborate groups which crowd these panels. Interesting, and charming also, as they are, one feels, nevertheless, that the fresh and single-hearted impulse, and the struggle with technical difficulties which give so great and irrecoverable a charm to the creations of the fifteenth century, are being replaced by eclecticism and a conscious display of professional skill.

Ubertini began his artistic life in the studio of Perugino, but there is otherwise little in common

between him and Raphael, the last great name in the Umbrian School. Never altogether abandoning the feeling of Umbria, the latter blended with it the science of Florence, and expanded both together into an art which, in its way, is quite incomparable. It is the earlier stages of his great career that are best illustrated in the National Gallery. First of all (at least, according to accepted authority), is the exquisite little "Vision of a Knight" (No. 213), with the original drawing pricked for its transfer to the panel. The young knight is lying on his shield beneath a laurel tree, and behind him stand two beautiful female figures, one holding a sword and a book, the other a sprig of myrtle. It would seem as though the artist had meant to suggest that the youth had to make his supreme choice in life between the path of love and pleasure and that of faith and duty. A graver and nobler beauty characterises the figure on the left, but the other is so fresh and pure that the choice scarcely seems to be one of good and evil, but rather between a higher and a lower good. In some respects this lovely little composition seems to be in advance of Perugino his master, and of some of his own work to which a later date is assigned.

The comprehension of the human body, shown by the manner in which it is felt beneath the drapery, and the harmony and balance of its parts, the clever way in which the figures are arranged and brought together by the tree and the lines of the landscape, the sweetness of the colour,—all these show what an accomplished artist he must have been when he entered the studio of Perugino, if the work really dates from about that time. This is supposed to have been about the year 1500, when he was about seventeen years old. How he obtained his previous instruction has never been satisfactorily settled. His mother died in 1491, and his father, Giovanni Santi of Urbino, in 1494, when he was left in charge of two uncles. According to the theory of Morelli, which has found much acceptance, he owed his first training to an artist of Urbino, called Timoteo Viti. This suggestion is favoured by the resemblance in type and feeling for grace which exists between the few remaining works of Viti and Raphael's early work. The affinity between Raphael and certain painters of the school of Ferrara-Bologna, especially Francia, is also accounted for by this theory, as Viti was the pupil and assistant of Francia. Viti, moreover, is known

to have returned from Bologna to Urbino in the year after the death of Raphael's father. One practice which was common to Raphael and Viti, which does not seem to have been adopted by Perugino, was that of making preliminary studies for figures and groups in ordinary costume of a simple character. It will be observed in the drawing of the "Vision of the Knight" that his legs are without the armour which appears in the picture. There can be no doubt about the date of "The Virgin and Child attended by St. John the Baptist and St. Nicholas of Bari," commonly known as the "Madonna degli Ansidei," which has attained a special notoriety on account of the enormous price, over £70,000, that was paid for it to the late Duke of Marlborough. It was painted, or at least finished, in 1506, or some years after Raphael had entered Perugino's workshop at Perugia. He was still under twenty, but had been to Florence in 1504, where he had seen the works of all the great men, including the cartoons of Leonardo da Vinci and Michael Angelo. The influence of this visit is thought to be observable in this picture, especially in the noble figure of S. Nicholas and the head of the Baptist. The Virgin and Child are purely

ST. CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA.—*Raphael.*

Perugmesque. The picture would be of unusual value if it were only for the fineness of its condition. There is no other picture by Raphael, at least of the same size, which is quite pure and untouched, none so luminous and fine in colour. Much damaged, but still fairly preserved as a whole and harmonious in its general tone, is the lovely figure of "S. Catherine of Alexandria" (No. 168). This was painted about a year after the "Madonna degli Ansidei," and shows a further influence of Florentine art in the fine type and expression of the head and the drawing of the figure. It also shows the growth of his own ideal of grace—of the Raphaelesque. This is seen in its full development in what is called the Garvagh Raphael, "The Madonna, Infant Christ, and S. John" (No. 744), a picture which, while still adhering to a Peruginesque type in the Virgin, contains perfect examples of sweet and complete idealism of childish form in the figures of Christ and S. John. Both are cast in that mould, perfected only by Raphael himself, in which every limb to its tiniest detail is in perfect relation to the rest, and the whole form, while not departing perceptibly from the facts of nature, presents an harmonic beauty of structure not to be surpassed.

Such creative power was only possible when the difficulties of correct drawing of the human form had been thoroughly mastered, and a great artist like Raphael or Michael Angelo could use it freely as a vehicle of his thought. In this, and the S. Catharine also, we see the old ascetic ideal completely superseded, and nature, healthy and beautiful, again used as the symbol of the saint-like and divine, as the "outward and visible form of an inward and spiritual grace." In these pictures of the "Holy Family," in which the ideas of both family and holiness were combined in the most charming harmony, the peculiarly gentle and fertile imagination of Raphael revelled; and there is scarcely a period of his career, however busily employed in vaster and more sublime creations, in which he did not add to the number of these lovely flowers of sacred fancy. A good old copy of the Bridgwater Madonna (No. 929) and a tracing of the "Madonna di San Sisto" are all the National Gallery has to show of the later developments of this side of his genius; but at the South Kensington Museum are the great "Cartoons," which are the finest examples in England of the art of Central Italy in full maturity. The art which commenced with Giotto

and progressed through Masaccio, Ghirlandajo, Signorelli to Michael Angelo and Raphael, culminated in such works as these, in which the human form was treated with perfect sense of its beauty and majesty in relation to stately architecture. The revelation of the beauty of the human body in relation to nature was reserved for Venice to discover.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BEAUTY OF UGLINESS.

BETWEEN Rooms I. and V. there is a little slip of a room which holds one picture, to which reference has already been made, in "The Valleys of Peace." This is the large altar-piece by Ercole di Giulio Cesare Grandi (1460?–1531) (No. 1119). Here, also, are some celebrated paintings by Francia (1450–1517). There is a tenderness of religious sentiment and a feeling for grace in these pictures which ally them to the works of some Tuscan and Umbrian artists, especially those of Perugino. But if we turn to the paintings of the earlier masters of Ferrara in this room—Tura and Cossa, Ercole de' Roberti Grandi and Zoppo, for example—we are conscious of a strange element, as though we had got among new people. We have hard and almost forbidding types, severity instead of tenderness, angularity instead of grace,

and, may I be forgiven for saying it, ugliness instead of beauty.

Such pictures are sufficient to remind us that, however powerful the influence of Florence may have been on Italian Art, she was by no means the only nursery of pictorial design, and that to the north of her there were other States, inhabited by men of different race, or different blendings of races, where schools of painting developed, marked by great independence of style and feeling—schools which, while perhaps owing much in their infancy to Giotto, became, in the fifteenth century, strong enough not only to stand by themselves, but to take a lead of their own. In this room there is one picture only which may be said to belong to the School of Giotto, or, rather, to the same period as the Giotteschi, and this is "The Madonna and Child," by Lippo di Dalmasio (No. 752), who was painting between 1376 and 1410, both inclusive. He was noted, as his master Vitale before him, for his pictures of Madonnas. We are, indeed, told that, in the beginning of the fifteenth century, a Madonna by Lippo was one of those things which no rich person, of Bologna, should be without. It is only possible to understand the taste for such insipid and

conventional work by supposing that it was the best to be had in Bologna at the time; and this was no doubt the case, for painting in Bologna did not flourish very freely in the fourteenth century, nor, indeed, till late in the fifteenth, when its native talent was recruited by visitors and settlers from Ferrara, the most important of whom were Francesco Cossa, Lorenzo Costa, and the Grandi. It was an invasion of the gentler and softer by the stronger and sterner—a conquest rather than an alliance.

Though we speak of the School of Ferrara-Bologna, the elements of each stock seem never to have been quite blended. They are fairly represented by the weak but still graceful sentiment of Lippo Dalmasio on the one hand, and the vigorous but unlovely conceptions of Tura on the other. Lippo was pure Bolognese, Tura was the typical master of Ferrara. The harshness of Ferrara is dominant in the work of Zoppo and Ercole di Roberti Grandi; the softness, not of Ferrara, in the later works of Costa, and those of his fellow-worker Francia.

In the splendid altar-piece by Ercole di Giulio Grandi, a Ferrarese, but a pupil of Costa and Francia, there is something of both spirits, but

these are seen side by side rather than fused together. This is specially obvious in the ornament on the splendid throne, where the sculpturesque reliefs have almost a classical sense of beauty, while the figures in the painted scenes are coarse in type and violent in movement, so that it is hard to think that the same taste which created one kind could have been satisfied with the other. This picture, which remained in Ferrara till 1882, was there assigned to Costa himself. Morelli suggests that the design is Costa's and the execution only by Grandi. At all events, it represents the best design of which Costa was capable more nearly than the genuine, pleasant, but withal weak altar-piece, "The Madonna and Child enthroned with Angels" (No. 629). Whether the amenity and gentleness so plainly seen in the larger figures of Grandi's altar-piece, in the later works of Costa, and those of Francia, was born entirely at Bologna, or derived partly from Umbria, may be a matter of conjecture, but the undeniable affinity between the temper of these artists, and that of Perugino and Raphael, is obvious enough, even if we go no further than the National Gallery for comparison.

Let no one suppose, however, that because, in

the National Gallery, he has to pass through the School of Ferrara-Bologna on his way from the Tuscan to the Umbrian pictures, that that was the route taken by Art itself. In this respect the arrangement of the pictures is apt to mislead, and should be altered, if possible. The true founts of the School of Ferrara-Bologna are to be found among the works of the early masters of Verona, Padua, and Venice, and not among those of Florence, Umbria, or Siena. If we seek for the directest evidence as regards Verona, we shall find it in a rare little panel by Vittore Pisano, commonly called Pisanello, now in Room VII. (No. 776), which represents S. Anthony and S. George. This great artist was born in 1380 at San Vigilio, in the Veronese territory, and is specially famous for his medals, casts from two of which are inserted in the frame of this picture. Unfortunately, all of his mural paintings have disappeared, except some interesting fragments at Verona, and there is little left of his handiwork but his medals, and two or three small movable pictures, of which this is one. The Earl of Ashburnham has another, a more wonderful one—the "Miraculous Stag appearing to S. Eustace," or "The Vision of S. Hubert"—which

was lent to the Early Italian Exhibition at the New Gallery in the winter of 1893–4.* He had special delight and skill in the delineation of animals, as may be seen in this picture, and still more plainly in Lord Ashburnham's, and in some admirable drawings preserved in the Louvre. Of his artistic education and the other events of his life little is really known, but there is no doubt that he had a great influence in the development of painting in the north of Italy. At Venice, in company with Gentile da Fabriano (1360?–1450), he was employed in decorating the Sala del Gran Consiglio in the Ducal Palace, about 1421–2—a date at which Venetian painting was still in its infancy. In many respects—in the drawing of the horses' heads, in the pose of S. George, and the lavish use of gold—this little picture recalls the "Adoration of the Kings," by Gentile da Fabriano, at the Accademia at Florence. The picture also gives some colour to the theory that Pisano's art was based upon that of the miniaturists, for whom Verona was celebrated; but it contains little trace of any Florentine influence. In some respects the work is archaic, as in the strange hat of S. George, the silvering of the

* It has now been added to the National Gallery.

armour, and the embossing of the gold spurs, sword, and bit (though this practice continued later, as we see in our examples of A. Vivarini and Crivelli); but in the refined and severe modelling of the heads, the beauty of its colour, and the combined minuteness and breadth of the painting, it is a work far in advance of his time, which was much the same as that of Fra Angelico, whose senior he was by about seven years. He worked at Verona and Venice, at Pavia and Rome, at Mantua, Rimini, and Ferrara. This picture came from the Costabili Gallery at Ferrara, and one of the medallions in the frame represents his patron, Leonello D'Este, Marquis of Ferrara, who succeeded to the lordship in 1441, and died in 1450.

Another portrait of the same noble in the Ferrarese room (No. 770), is by Oriolo,* who is supposed to have been a pupil of Pisano; but a closer link to Pisano's picture, if not to the artist himself, is afforded by a picture—"S. Jerome in the Desert" (No. 771)—by Bono of Ferrara.† Bono's "S. Jerome" is remarkably like Pisano's

* See also the interesting battle-piece (No. 1062), where the figure on the extreme left bears a strong likeness to Leonello.

† Now hanging beside the Pisanos in Rome VII.

"S. Anthony," and the landscape recalled to Morelli the landscapes of Gentile da Fabriano, who, as we have seen, was a fellow-worker with Pisano. In the background is seen a building lighted from within, the earliest example of this effect in the National Gallery.

Here we get a direct and palpable sequence from master to pupil. But the influence of Pisano and Verona upon the School of Ferrara was not perhaps so strong as that of Squarcione and Padua.

Squarcione is an artist whom we scarcely know by his work. What remains of it, or rather those pictures which are ascribed to him, do not proclaim a genius, but there is no doubt that he was a great educational force. He had travelled, they say, in Greece and other places, and collected fragments and casts of antique sculpture, and he taught his pupils to draw from them. It would be very instructive and delightful now to be able to peer into his studio and see what these classical remains were. Some busts, perhaps, with broken noses; a torso or so, probably rather Roman than Greek; some fragments of drapery, doubtless; and what would seem more certain than anything else, some purely decorative reliefs, with festoons of

flowers and fruit. Such festoons, copied apparently from carved architectural ornaments in stone, are a very distinct feature of what is regarded as the School of Squarcione of Padua. They are important elements in the compositions of his great pupil, Andrea Mantegna, and of his lesser pupil, Gregorio Schiavone; their presence in the pictures of the Vivarini of Murano, and of Carlo Crivelli of Venice and Ascoli, are taken as tokens of the influence of Squarcione on these painters; and in like manner, and perhaps with even greater reason, the fondness of Cosimo Tura of Ferrara for elaborate ornament of this character is supposed to have been derived from the same source. At all events, any one who wishes to understand the work of Cosimo Tura should study it in connection with the early masters of Padua and Venice, and a fair opportunity of doing so is afforded in the National Gallery by the pictures it contains from the hands of Gregorio Schiavone, Antonio and Bartolommeo Vivarini, Carlo Crivelli, Andrea Mantegna, and Giovanni Bellini, when as a youth he studied and worked at Padua.

But it is not only a fondness for a particular kind of ornament which distinguishes the followers of Squarcione. They were, perhaps, the least

pictorial of painters. As we have seen, the Tuscan painters of the fifteenth century were greatly influenced by the sculptors, including the goldsmiths; and the ideal of a well-balanced figure, with clearly cut contours, relieved against a more or less architectural background, may be said to have reigned in Florence from Giotto to Michael Angelo; but yet the Florentines were always endeavouring to release painting from too great dependence upon the other arts, and even to develop pictorial expression in their sculpture. In the School of Squarcione at Padua, the tendency was in the opposite direction. A sculptured figure against a niche or other architectural background seems to have been the normal scheme for a picture in his school. And while the bonds of sculpture were thus tightened, its finest and most essential quality was ignored, viz. the beauty of the human body. In the pictures of Gregorio Schiavone, in those of Tura, and in the earlier works even of Mantegna, mean, harsh, and even repulsive types are of frequent occurrence. But the days in which the beauty of the human body was to recover its supreme position in art had not yet arrived, and notwithstanding the classical renaissance which was started in the North by

Squarcione, and was so vigorously promoted by Mantegna, there was yet little appreciation of human beauty for its own sake, little of that joy in existence which revelled in the loveliness of nature. Like the Giotteschi, Squarcione and his pupils painted mainly for the Church, and their efforts were the expression of various forms of religious feeling. This feeling was also of a singularly ascetic and severe type, often expressed with a fantastic grimness akin to the grotesque. Both in the types employed by these painters, and in the peculiar strains of religious affectation, which animate and often contort the features of their saints, there is much that reminds us of a still more northern art—the art of Germany and Flanders. How far this may be attributed to the influence of northern artists who visited the north of Italy, or to a strong infusion of Teutonic blood in the race, it is not easy to say ; but there is no doubt that there is a closer affinity between the art of Northern Europe and that of Padua, Venice, and Ferrara, in the second half of the fifteenth century, than has ever been fully accounted for. In this love of realism, in apparent disregard of physical beauty, in love of elaborate detail, ornament, and finish, in types both male and female,

and notably in that of Christ, we are frequently reminded of Flemish art. But the likeness extends beyond externals.

We shall look in vain among the works of other Italian Schools to find a match to a saint by Gregorio Schiavone or Carlo Crivelli in fantastic mien and exaggerated character, but we shall find several even in our small collection of early German artists, especially in "Two Saints" (No. 707), ascribed to Master Stephen.

In connection with these remarks and the pictures of the early Ferrarese masters, it will be well to pay particular attention to the two examples of Gregorio Schiavone, "The Madonna and Child enthroned with various Saints" (No. 630), and the "Madonna and Infant Christ" (No. 904), those of Antonio and Bartolomeo Vivarini (Nos. 768 and 284), Mantegna's "Agony in the Garden" (No. 1417), and his brother-in-law Giovanni's very similar treatment of the same subject (No. 726), the latter artist's "Blood of the Redeemer" (No. 1233), and all the paintings of Crivelli. These, with the works of the Ferrarese artists, Cosimo Tura and Marco Zoppo, form a distinct group of pictures, which may be characterised as Squarcionesque. Most of them will come

under consideration again as examples of the Venetian School; we are now concerned with that of Ferrara.

Cosimo Tura, or Il Cosmè (1430–95), the founder of the School of Ferrara, had, according to Sir Frederick Burton, "a limited perception of the beauties of the human countenance and form," "inexhaustible patience in executing details," "and a passion for superabundant ornament;" and he says that his pictures "arrest attention by their earnestness of purpose and vigorous manipulation, as well as by their strange and original colouring." "Not," the same authority carefully adds, "that Tura was a colourist in the highest sense." This is not a very brilliant list of qualities. It is deficient in the two most essential to Art, viz. beauty of form and beauty of colour. Tura was deficient also in grace and tenderness, as any one can see who looks at his pictures here. If, however, Tura lacked sweetness, he did not lack power. His hand, if hard, was sure; his colour, if not lovely, was in tune, and in the sterner kind of subject, like "S. Jerome in the Wilderness" (No. 773), appropriate. His gifts as an artist were therefore genuine and distinct, if not great or agreeable; and in the "S. Jerome"

ST. JEROME.—*Tura.*

at least, there is much of what may be called "beauty in ugliness." The rocky landscape is sternly impressive, and the figure of the saint is conceived with great force, and drawn with masterful energy. Among the interesting details of the picture are the grotesque lion with the thorn in his foot, and an owl, and a woodpecker on the rock behind the saint. In the background is the kneeling figure of Duke Borso of Ferrara, the patron of the artist, who succeeded Leonello in 1451. Not so interesting or beautiful, but equally characteristic of the master is "The Madonna and Child enthroned" (No. 772). The mind that could conceive the noble, if rugged, St. Jerome, failed when called upon to depict the Queen of Heaven and her attendant angels. As may be seen in other schools, painters were often driven to affectation, in order to distinguish the Virgin from her company; but in Tura this affectation is unusually disagreeable, as it is combined with coarse types, ungainly movements, vulgar colour, and a profusion of tasteless ornament. Any work, however, in which a strong individuality is so plainly marked cannot be without interest, and wherever we look in this composition, whether to the expression of the

features, the moulding of the limbs, the lighting or the colouring, the forms of the ornament or the folds of the drapery, we shall find the name of Cosimo Tura writ large. The harsh-faced "Virgin Mary" (No. 905) is another type of the Madonna employed (and perhaps more commonly employed) by Tura, in whose mind the character of Mary seems to have been unallied with any feelings of tenderness or benignity. Much the same rude force and disregard of grace are seen in "Christ placed in the Tomb" (No. 590), a little work by Marco Zoppo, an artist who is a link between the Schools of Padua, Ferrara, and Bologna. He was a pupil of Squarcione, a pupil of Tura, and was the first painter of any distinction who belonged to Bologna, where he was born in the earlier half of the fifteenth century, and where he was working in fresco at the Casa Colonna in 1498. It is interesting to record that one of the wings of Tura's altar-piece (No. 772) has recently been discovered in the Colonna Palace at Rome.

It is one of the peculiarities of these Ferrarese painters, a peculiarity shared by some Flemish and German painters, notably by Albert Dürer, that they could be much more graceful and beautiful

at some times than at others, apparently without any special intention. There is a picture by Tura of Charity surrounded with children in the Poldi-Pezzoli collection at Milan, which is not only large in style, as was his wont, but quite simple and tender and beautiful; and in the recent exhibition of the art of Ferrara-Bologna at the Burlington Fine Arts Club was a "Virgin and Child" by Marco Zoppo, in which the Madonna's face was full of brooding tenderness, and pleasant if not lovely in its type. But it is probable that these painters were not so much occupied by what we call grace and beauty as an end of art, as by character and certain more professional aims like decorative effect and skill in foreshortening. One rock at least they steered perfectly clear of, and that was sentimental prettiness.

A painter of Ferrara who stands side by side with Tura at the head of the purely Ferrarese School is Francesco Cossa, by whom we have a very interesting panel representing S. Hyacinth (wrongly called S. Vincentio Ferrer in the catalogue). Though Cossa came of the same training as Tura, and there is thus naturally much affinity between their styles, they were of different temperaments. In the words of Sir F. Burton's catalogue,

"while Tura was fantastic and inclined to the lavish use of decoration, Cossa, with severer views of his art, sought to give dignity and grandeur to his figures, and kept ornamentation within its proper bounds." It may be added that Cossa, though "severer" in one sense, viz. that he saw more clearly, and kept more strictly within, the true limits of fine art, had more amenity than Tura; his decorative instinct was more refined, his sense of grace less crude. He was also a sweeter, finer colourist. He worked with Tura under the patronage of Duke Borso, and shared with other artists in the decoration of the Schifanoia Palace at Ferrara, contributing frescoes of scenes from the life of the Duke and allegorical compositions now nearly ruined. He removed to Bologna in 1470, where his finest works are to be seen. His movable pictures are rare. The S. Hyacinth in the National Gallery is the only one (with the possible exception of a portrait) now in England. It formed the central part of an altar-piece, the parts of which are now dispersed between Rome, London, and Milan. The two other panels painted with S. Peter and S. John the Baptist are in the Brera, recently acquired from the Barbi-Cinti collection. The *predella*, painted with scenes

from the life of S. Hyacinth, is in the Vatican. Our beautiful panel, for its size, is as characteristic and fine a specimen of the master as exists. The painting throughout is of fine quality, the modelling and expression of the head admirable, the colour strong and fine, but soft withal, and the abundant detail executed with great skill and patience, but kept in due subordination. The strange background, with its fantastic erections, half architecture, half rock, is of less beauty, but equally characteristic of the artist.

And of Ferrara also—for late as the rise of the Ferrarese School was, and many the sources from which it derived nourishment, there is none which had more pronounced and distinct features from the first. There was probably more artistic force and character in the race than can be now discovered in the remains of Ferrarese painting before Tura. Some works now perished may have contained more promise, or even performance. Nothing we know can quite account for the sudden and almost simultaneous appearance of two such artists as Tura and Cossa. With all their faults they were strong, accomplished, and original masters, racy of the soil from which they sprung. Tura is now thought to have been born

as late as 1430, and was, therefore, only about ten years old when Leonello d'Este, the first patron of the arts in Ferrara, succeeded to the marquisate. One of the oldest of Italian families, that of Este, has a special interest for us, as Albert Azzo II., Lord of Este, born about 996, married Cunegonda of the house of Guelf, whose son was Guelf, Duke of Bavaria, the ancestor of Queen Victoria. Among the artists Leonello invited to his court were Pisanello, Piero della Francesca, the young Mantegna, the old Jacopo Bellini, and the Fleming, Roger van der Weyden. Tura and Cossa may have derived from the works of these and other masters some influences, before and after they went to Squarcione's Academy at Padua; but the fact remains that they were strong enough in their own individualities to start a school with marked peculiarities. Borso, the first Duke, succeeded in 1450, and though he cared less for literature and art than Leonello, it was under his reign (1450–1471) that Tura and Cossa created the school, which grew and flourished, till from its stern and gnarled stem there sprang the lovely blossom of Correggio. As has been said, one of these founders, Cossa, migrated, in 1470, from Ferrara to Bologna, attracted no doubt by the liberal patronage afforded

to artists under the rule of the Bentivogli. Tura alone of the earlier men remained faithful to his birthplace. First employed by Duke Borso, in 1451, he obtained a fixed appointment in 1458, and had the less inclination to change his quarters, as he engaged profitably in the timber and other trades, and died a wealthy man in 1495. But his colleague, Cossa, the two Grandi, and Lorenzo Costa, all found it desirable to shift their quarters to the more generous atmosphere of Bologna, where they developed a greater feeling for the graceful and the sensuous. Of the elder Grandi, whose earlier work is distinguished by its harsh and determined realism, we have three small but characteristic specimens. "The Last Supper" (No. 1127), purchased at the sale of the Duke of Hamilton's pictures, as a Masaccio, is remarkable for its pure colour, its minute finish, and the strong character of the figures—a masterpiece of a severe type, showing an affinity with Mantegna and also perhaps with Flemish feeling, yet distinctly Ferrarese, in its types, its colour, and the rich marble decoration of the hall. "The Israelites gathering Manna in the Wilderness" (No. 1217), is still more characteristic of the master in its bright, luminous colour, and the stiff, but freshly

studied, action of the figures. It had long been recognised as a genuine work of this master before its purchase from the Dudley collection. The diptych representing the Nativity and the Entombment, once belonging to Sir Charles Eastlake, and one of the most recent acquisitions of the Gallery, is evidently a later work, painted under the softening influence of Lorenzo Costa.

It is not easy to account fully for the change which came over the spirit of Ferrarese art when it migrated to Bologna. Culture was perhaps more widely spread, manners more refined, there was more of grace and beauty in the type of the people, the reigning family of Bentivoglio had perhaps a gentler and finer taste; in some way, at all events, a soil was prepared in which the plant of Ferrarese art flourished, and, passing from the stage in which force of character and exuberant ornament were preferred to grace and sentiment, it developed a love of beauty and a delight in life to which it had hitherto been strange. It is to be noted that the change effected was not due to any pictorial influence in Bologna—it was automatic in the Ferrarese artists who settled there. It began with Cossa, who had resided at Bologna for some twelve years before Lorenzo

Costa followed his example. Costa was a pupil of Cosimo Tura, and his early works are almost as hard and dry as his master's, and apt to be confounded with those of Ercole de' Roberti Grandi. The influence of these two artists is plainly perceptible in his earliest signed works at Bologna (tempera pictures) in the Bentivoglio Chapel, in the Church of S. Giacomo Maggiore. But in a few years we find his colour grows more rich, his types more tender, his drapery falls in freer folds, and his angels assume an exquisite beauty. (See description of altar-piece in S. Giovanni in Monte. Kugler's "Handbook," ed. 1889, ii. 353.) This transformation was no doubt greatly due to his companionship with Francia (1450–1517), a goldsmith of Bologna, with whom he had apparently already formed a friendship. They lived on different floors of the same house, and the goldsmith became the pupil of the painter. But Francia was already an exquisite draughtsman, an accomplished worker in metals, and was some ten years the senior of his master in painting. It is not, therefore, surprising that Costa should have learnt as much as he taught.

Whatever effect, however, they may have had upon one another is not plainly perceptible in

their pictures. The refinement observable, as the result of Costa's stay at Bologna, is not distinctly Franciesque; the painting of Francia, though learnt from Costa and naturally nearer to the School of Ferrara in colour than to other schools, is not to be mistaken for that of Costa. Their individualities developed in different directions, and Francia's paintings, with their clear, refined outlines, their smooth, transparent, enamel-like body, their tender pathos of expression, seek and find an ideal as clearly and exclusively his own as that of any master. All he learnt from Costa was the means of expressing himself in a different medium, and that self was far more akin to the spirit of Umbria than the spirit of Ferrara. Unfortunately, our example of Costa, "The Madonna and Child enthroned with Angels" (No. 629), though genuine enough, does not do him justice. It is dated 1505, which is after his best period. It would however be difficult to find more exquisite specimens of Francia's skill than the two parts of the altar-piece, originally painted for the Buonvisi Chapel in the Church of San Frediano at Lucca (Nos. 179 and 180). Perhaps not only in the colour, but the realism of these works, we may trace the influence of Ferrara. It

will be observed that the Virgin (in 180) is represented as a middle-aged woman, and that the lids of the angels' eyes are red with weeping. A likeness, especially perhaps in the tenderness of sentiment and the golden tones of the flesh, is observable between the work of Francia and Perugino. The two artists had, no doubt, much in common, but these realistic traces are of themselves sufficient to show that Francia was in no way an imitator of Perugino. In spirit also they are different. Francia makes his angels appeal to the spectator, as if to enlist his sympathy in the pathos of the tragedy, holding up the beautiful tresses of Christ's hair to aid in the appeal. This Perugino would never have done; his angels, and his saints also, are always wrapt in a spiritual ecstasy to which Francia could not attain.

With the altar-piece by Ercole di Giulio Grandi, to which reference has already been made more than once, the fifteenth century period of the Ferrarese School may be said to end. In this work, so purely Ferrarese in some of its features, especially the gorgeous throne adorned with sculpture, mosaics, and painting, and yet showing so strongly in the tenderness of its sentiment and the grace of its figures (especially, perhaps,

the youthful and gallant S. William), the change which had been wrought by the migration of his master Costa to Bologna, we have in one work summed up for us the history of the Ferrarese School in the fifteenth century, from Squarcione to Francia.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE THREE RIVERS.

In Venice and the North, as in Florence and elsewhere in Italy, there were three different streams of feeling distinctly visible in the Art of the fifteenth century. First of all was the Mediæval stream, flowing from Byzantium and stimulated by the Church. The life of this current was longer and stronger at Venice than elsewhere, because of the propinquity to Constantinople of the Queen of the Adriatic, its commerce with the East, and its adherence to the Eastern Empire, after almost all the rest of Italy had ceased to recognise its authority. Secondly, there was the Renaissance stream, fed by the revival of classic literature and the admiration for the remains of classic art in architecture and sculpture; and thirdly, the Natural stream, whose fount was in man himself, and was bursting again through the dams formed

by anarchy and superstition out of the ruins of the civilisation of ancient Rome.

In the city of Padua, which may be regarded as an art-outwork of Venice, these streams were all at work in the middle and latter half of the fifteenth century, fertilising the ground for the final great harvest of Italian Art. The course and influence of all of them can be readily traced in the National Gallery, and nowhere more conveniently than in the works of three contemporaries—all men of high accomplishment and original genius. These were Carlo Crivelli, Andrea Mantegna, and Giovanni Bellini—Carlo Crivelli, in whom the mediæval element is strongest, combined with a strong romantic feeling; Andrea Mantegna, the master of form and style, whose designs breathe the very spirit of the Renaissance; Giovanni Bellini, who was to develop more than any of his precursors or colleagues that delight in nature and joy in life, which were soon to produce a revolution in art under his pupils Titian and Giorgione. All these men were trained at Padua, a city which, without forming any school of its own, had a great influence on the development of art. Here in former days had worked Altichiero and Avanzi from Verona, Giotto and

Donatello from Florence, and many other artists from other places, and though it could not number great artists amongst its natives, it was a centre of culture and a depôt of masterpieces of all kinds of art, when Mantegna, its one great painter, was born within its walls.

But before we examine their pictures, it will be desirable to pay some attention to those of other artists who were more or less concerned in their development. Unfortunately, we are not very precisely informed with regard to the birth-dates of several of the earlier Venetian painters of importance, but it seems clear that they were all of a somewhat later generation than Francesco. Squarcione the Paduan (1394–1474), and Jacopo Bellini the Venetian, who was born about the beginning of the fifteenth century and died in 1464. Jacopo, the father of the more celebrated Gentile and Giovanni Bellini, was apprenticed in Venice to Gentile da Fabriano, and followed him to Florence, afterwards settling at Padua. Here his school became a rival to that of Squarcione, and amongst his own pupils were no doubt his sons. They were much of the same age as Andrea Mantegna (1431–1506), the adopted son and most celebrated pupil of Squarcione, and whatever rivalry

there may have been between the masters, Squarcione's pupil was intimate with the Bellini and married Jacopo's daughter Niccolosia.

Of the intimate artistic relations between the families the early works of Mantegna and Giovanni Bellini are sufficient testimony, and afford ground for supposing that both of them were more or less influenced by Jacopo as well as by Squarcione. Unfortunately nearly all Jacopo's paintings have perished, and those that survive are in very bad condition; but there are two books of sketches by him, one in the British Museum, dated at Venice in 1430, and another full of much later and finer drawings in the Louvre, which give him a high place among the original designers of his time. The figure of Christ in Giovanni Bellini's "Agony in the Garden," so similar to that in Mantegna's picture of the same subject, is taken from a drawing by Jacopo. It would be interesting to know when Jacopo first settled in Padua, if it were only to determine the date at which he could have had any influence on Mantegna, whose genius developed so early that strong and distinct personal characteristics are to be seen in an altar-piece (now in the Brera at Milan) executed in 1454, when Mantegna was only twenty-three years old. What,

however, most concerns us now is the undoubted fact that the future of the Venetian School was very materially affected by the teaching of both Jacopo Bellini the Venetian and Francesco Squarcione of Padua.

But there was another important and more purely native element in the Venetian School, and this was contributed by certain painters of the island of Murano—a place of much more importance in those days. Here a native of Murano, named Antonio, and a German named John, worked in partnership in the second quarter of the fifteenth century, and signed their works "Johannes (or Johannes Alemannus) et Antonius de Muriano." After 1450 Antonio left John the German, and painted in association with his younger brother Bartolommeo, who, in 1459, took the name of Vivarini, by which both brothers, and their younger kinsman Luigi (or Alvise), are now known, although it was never adopted by Antonio. It was with this "long-established firm" that the Bellini had to compete on removing to Venice, about 1460, some four years before Jacopo's death.

It is not known who was the master of Antonio, but he was possibly some pupil of Gentile da Fabriano or Pisanello, whose works at Venice

(now destroyed) are supposed to have greatly influenced him. The traditions of the Byzantine School, and a German strain caught from his partner John, were also elements in his development. His work is formal, but marked by seriousness and dignity; his types are often fine; his drawing powerful, and his colour full and soft and warm.

We are fortunate in possessing two panels of saints by him ("SS. Peter and Jerome," No. 768, and "SS. Francis and Mark," No. 1284), which are characteristic, and worthy of his considerable power, especially as a colourist. In the rich golden-red of St. Jerome's mantle, in the preserved purity of the prevalent tone through broad masses of deep and transparent colour, he exhibits qualities which were thereafter to be distinctive of the Venetian School, and divide him completely from Squarcione and his stony manner. The influence of the Paduan teacher is, however, very plain in the beautiful "Virgin and Child," by Antonio's younger brother Bartolommeo—"Virgin and Child, with SS. Paul and Jerome" (No. 284). Here, though the colour is bright and transparent, it is much more broken up, the modelling is more searching and precise, and the picture as a whole is evidently

THE VIRGIN OF THE ROCKS.—*Leonardo da Vinci.*

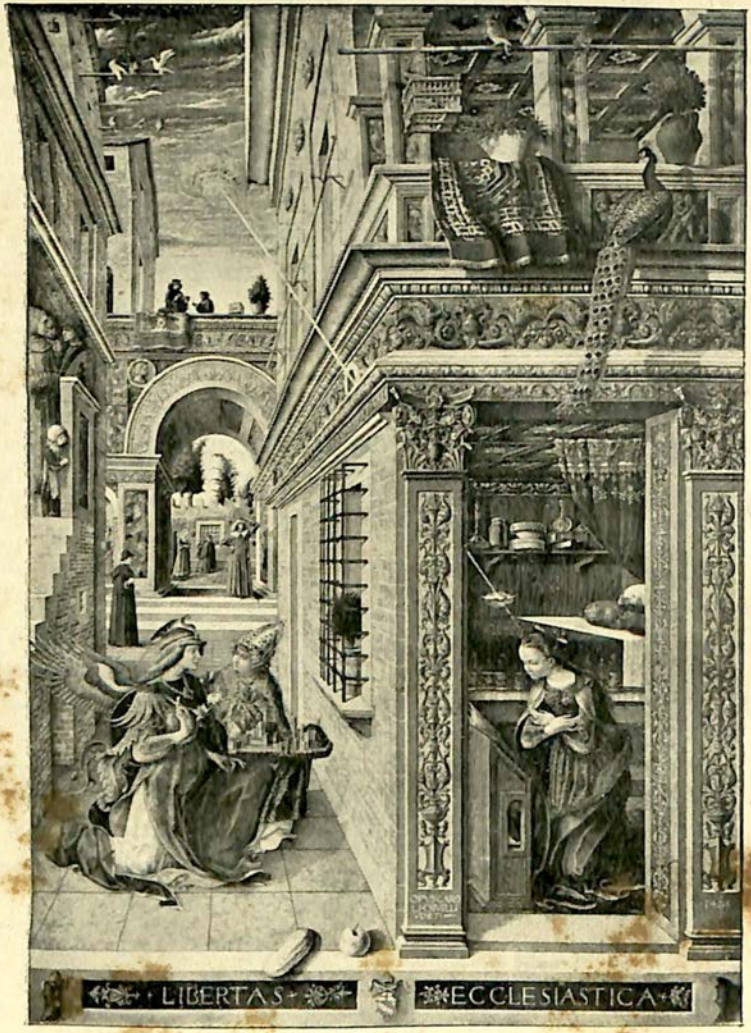
the work of an artist who is more intent upon form than colour.

In Bartolommeo Vivarini (*fl.* 1450–1498–9) we have a graft of Squarcione on the Murano School; for a pure Squarcionesque we must go to Gregorio Schiavone (The Slavonian), a native of Dalmatia, who, like Bono of Ferrara, showed his pride in his master by recording his discipleship upon the face of his works. It is not known when he was born, or when he died, but he was a fellow-pupil with Andrea Mantegna about 1450. He appears in his two works here as a rude and dull edition of Carlo Crivelli, without his sense of grace or feeling for colour, but interesting for his decided character and as a link between his master and Crivelli. It seems, however, most probable that he was neither a follower nor a precursor of the latter, but only his fellow-student, aiming in the same direction, but with inferior talents. The saints in Schiavone's "The Madonna and Child, enthroned, with various Saints" (No. 630), and Crivelli's "The Madonna and Child, enthroned, surrounded by Saints" (No. 788), afford a perfect opportunity for comparing the capacities of the two men when employed upon the same themes. The other example of Schiavone, "Madonna and

Infant Christ" (No. 904), is also interesting in the same way. Compare, for instance, the modelling of the Child's legs with those of the Angels in Crivelli's exquisitely pathetic "The Dead Christ, a Pietà" (No. 602), and note the butterfly which has alighted on the dish of cherries—a thoroughly Crivellian fancy.

Carlo Crivelli is another Venetian artist of whom we know little but what can be gathered from pictures. He is supposed to have been born about 1430, and his dated works range from 1468 to 1493. He was a Venetian by birth, and from his mode it would appear certain that he studied under Squarcione at Padua, and probably also under the Vivarini at Venice. But he perfected a style, and one marked by so many peculiarities that despite all affinities which may be traced with other masters, he stands out clear and distinct by himself.

In the first place, he is unique as a colourist. He belongs, indeed, to the old mosaic and illumination school of colour, not to the school of great "schemes," in which the masses are blent into one great harmony. The masses or patches of colour are isolated, and produce a pleasant variegation, without fusion. His colour is thin



THE ANNUNCIATION.—*Crivelli.*

also, as of a superficial tinting, not affecting the substance. His flesh is hard and opaque, his flowers leathery, his fruit, though finely drawn and beautifully coloured, of a stony texture; and his draperies everything but soft. It is only in hard, smooth things, like pottery and glass, as in "The Madonna in Ecstasy," or of brick and marble, as in "The Annunciation," that you get the true consistency as well as the true colour. Yet his colour is exquisite of its kind, brilliant and transparent like enamel, and the different tints in themselves are lovely and varied. Such reds and greens, and lilacs and salmon-pinks, and a hundred other combinations of the primaries, are scarcely to be matched in the work of any other artist. Nor has any one been more skilful in the use of gold in connection with colour. Like Antonio Vivarini and Pisanello, he used it in relief, even decorating it with real stones, as we see in the keys, the mitre, and the orphreys of S. Peter, and the ornaments of S. Catherine. This was a remnant of Byzantine practice, and in unskilful hands has an unreal effect; but Crivelli's modelling was so forcible and his colour so carefully adapted, that the passage from paint to relief is scarcely perceptible.

There is scarcely need to call attention to Crivelli's special gift as a designer of decoration. Almost every square inch of his canvas attests the inexhaustible richness of his invention—an invention fed, no doubt, from the rich products of Oriental looms, of which Venice was the emporium. The patterns of his stuffs and dresses in the eight pictures in the National Gallery, are almost enough to set up a modern designer for life; and his sculpturesque ornamental reliefs are extraordinary for elegance, spirit, and audacity. See, for example, his treatment of elephants' heads and trunks, in "The Madonna in Ecstasy" (No. 906), and of dolphins in the great altar-piece (No. 788), and the boldness with which he has used the crown of a cherub's head as a decorative feature on the base of the throne of the same picture. It is to be remarked that the beautiful festoons which decorate this base, though adjusted to resemble carved ornament, are meant for real fruit. They are tied with string and fastened with nails. Such ingenious and abundant fancies, if they do not make the greatest art, are full of interest and charm, and render the work of Crivelli fascinating in no usual degree, if only for its decorative detail.

A higher order of invention is seen in the design of the various *mises en scène*, in which his figures are set. Occasionally, as in "The Beato Ferretti" (No. 668), we have a landscape, but by far the most beautiful at the National Gallery—probably the most beautiful that he ever painted—is that of "The Annunciation" (No. 739), in which he shows us the inside of the Virgin's Chamber, the outside of her magnificent house, and a street scene at once realistic and romantic. Although, perhaps, "The Annunciation" is exceeded by "The Madonna," etc. (No. 724), in brilliant purity of colour, and some of his single figures have more intensity of character, his genius is perhaps more completely represented in this picture than in any other. Here, for once, his lively fancy has had its fullest play, and revels in a gorgeousness and elaboration of detail even beyond his wont. Fortunately for him, his imagination was not trammelled, like that of artists of the present day, by questions of historical accuracy or physical possibilities. To him the presence of S. Emidius by the side of the announcing angel suggested no absurdity, and it never occurred to him that the neatly finished orifice through which the Holy Dove has entered

the Virgin's chamber would present any difficulty to the most realistic mind.

Here, for once, also, he gives us not only the incident, but introduces spectators, as was the custom of the Florentine School of the same period. Besides the frankly anachronistic bishop, there are several figures in the street dressed in the Italian costume of Crivelli's time. One noble-looking gentleman, dazzled by the sudden beam of light that strikes across the road, raises his hand to his brow, the better to investigate the extraordinary phenomenon. Still more naïve and delightful is the little child who timidly peeps from a place of vantage at the mysterious occurrence that is taking place over the way.

Thus we have the whole scene idyllically, even dramatically, rendered, as though we were present at an exquisitely mounted play. Although in many respects the works of Crivelli, by the strained formality of the figures, the system of coloration, and the profuse use of gold, still bear traces of remote influences, they seldom fail to remind us that we are past the middle of the fifteenth century, that the difficulties of anatomy and perspective have been mastered, that a lively interest in nature and human nature has sprung

up, that technical excellence and artistic beauty are sought for their own sakes—in a word, that Crivelli was the contemporary of Botticelli, Ghirlandajo, and Mantegna.

Crivelli wrought only for the Church, and appears to have spent most of his life at Ascoli, but neither restriction of subject and feeling, nor provincial residence, could fetter his genius. There is, indeed, no artist of more striking individuality than Carlo Crivelli, no one who had more complete mastery over his means of expression, or attained more nearly to his ideal. This ideal was not the "beau-ideal" of later art—that is to say, the perfection of physical beauty—it was an ideal of character, the embodiment of the essential qualities of his subject. When beauty was essential, as in the Virgin Mary, or the royal martyr, S. Catherine of Alexandria, it was sought, but only as one out of many attributes. When not essential, as in S. John Baptist or S. Peter, the artist's whole imagination was devoted to the creation of a form which should be the exact expression of the spirit within. In this aim he was not indeed original, but he achieved it with singular fervour and completeness. In some of his conceptions, as, for instance, in those of S. John

Baptist and S. Catherine, his imagination indulges in the extravagant and touches the grotesque. A refined fantasticism characterises his work generally, but it is always not only refined but coherent. It may be said that S. Catherine's fingers are preternaturally long, her demeanour affected, her expression a grimace; but if we say this, we must also say that the whole figure, hands and all, is a complete and most dainty conception, and that there is not a degraded line or a vulgar touch throughout.

I have dwelt so long upon Crivelli, not because he is comparable to the greatest artists as a mover of grand emotions, or as a master of the noblest form or colour, but because his really remarkable gifts are apt to be unduly neglected in comparison with more transcendent powers, and because the National Gallery is the best place in the world to study his rare individuality—I may add also, on account of the engaging personality which seems to breathe through his work. Such sentimental impressions are no doubt often rudely shaken by closer knowledge, but they are pleasant to indulge, and one cannot help regarding Crivelli as a man of knowledge and intellect, of charming manners, refined almost to fastidiousness, delighting in all

things dainty and beautiful, a lover of animals and of his kind. If he did not love animals, at least he loved to introduce them into his pictures. See the peacock and the smaller bird in the "Annunciation," the swallow in No. 724, and, not least, the ducks in the "Beato Ferretti."

There are, of course, greater painters and greater men on the roll of artists, but few who have more marked and more varied gifts; many who impress more, but few who amuse so much; many of wider range, but few so complete in themselves.

It is perhaps a sign of Squarcione's personal weakness as an artist that his scholars should have branched out in such various directions; but this is doubtful when we consider that Rembrandt himself taught not only Lievens, Eeckhout, and Bol, but also De Koninck, Maës, and Dou. At any rate, his teaching did not smother the individuality of either Crivelli, or Tura, or Mantegna, by far the greatest of the three. It is amusing to read that he complained of Mantegna's too great tendency to make his pictures like sculpturesque reliefs, as if this was not the natural result of his own teaching. The sculpturesque tendency was indeed almost the sole affinity between the master and the pupil. Squarcione taught Mantegna drawing

and perspective, but in the spirit and direction of his work, Donatello was by far the greater influence. It is difficult to over-estimate the effects of Donatello's work at Padua, such as the statue of Gattemalata, and the exquisite reliefs in the church of S. Antonio, upon the development of Mantegna's genius. In noting the comparative progress of the two arts of sculpture and painting in Italy, and in estimating the relative originality of the two artists, it is well to bear in mind that Donatello was born about fifty years before Mantegna. In both we find the strong aim for classic style; in both the equally strong realistic spirit. In both the two tendencies appear rather as rivals than friends—now one, now the other is uppermost.

Seldom do we see in their works that perfect fusion of both elements which characterises those of Masaccio and Michael Angelo. In the earliest of his pictures here ("The Agony in the Garden," No. 1417, recently acquired from the collection of Lord Northbrook), there is little trace of any classic feeling, or search after beauty, but much of the earnest study of anatomy and perspective.

The landscape, which has lost its colour, is thoroughly conventional, and much occupied with

castellated buildings and roads winding round with innumerable little figures. The human and the landscape forms and their arrangement are all such as would suggest themselves to the mind of a worker in relief rather than a painter. A prominent object in the distance is a little gilt equestrian statue, which was evidently suggested by Donato's "Gattemalata," and the foreshortening of the apostles is suggestive of a study by Paolo Uccello, an artist who is known to have worked at Padua. The whole work is full of ingenious and curious detail, amongst which the storks and the rabbits should not be missed. It is a great pity that the exact date of this interesting picture has not been ascertained, especially as it would go far to fix that of the same subject, similarly treated by Giovanni Bellini—"Christ's Agony in the Garden," No. 726.

If we presume, as I think we reasonably may, that both these pictures were painted, if not simultaneously, at least within a very short interval of time, they clearly prove that the two great painters, one of whom was to become pre-eminent as a master of form, and the other to lay the foundation of the greatest school of colour, ran on almost parallel lines up to a certain point

in their development. The picture by Bellini was, till comparatively recently, ascribed to Mantegna. The similarity in their work, and the fact that the elements common to both are seen in Mantegna's later work, and not in Bellini's, have led to the somewhat rash conclusion that Bellini at this period worked under a strong "influence" of Mantegna. It seems to me to prove only that they both studied under the same influence, and that their works up to this time had the "family likeness" of fellow-students, and that each afterwards retained or dropped those elements in their teaching which were respectively congenial or the reverse to their natural taste. The picture by Bellini shows, indeed, more originality than that of Mantegna. Mantegna's exhibits only a strong personal treatment of old conventions; Bellini's proclaims the dawn of a new world of art.

What was old in the pictures—the Christ kneeling on a little hill, with the sleepy apostles in foreshortened attitudes in the foreground, the angelic vision on a cloud, and the suggestion of a neighbouring city—are common to both pictures. What was new—the fresh observation of nature for its own sake—is found only in Bellini's. We see this in the smouldering clouds of sunset,

the light thrown on the distant buildings, the half-shade of the cliffs, the bringing-out of the figures into something like the real open, sun-illumined air, the attempt at solution of the problem of the tone of a face and figure relieved right against a sky. These things were new, and the commencement of a new movement in art. Art, no longer "cabined, cribbed, confined" between four walls, seeing nature only out of windows or at the end of streets, now began at last to walk abroad and take the air.

Henceforward landscape became not only an accessory but an essential, and the human form was seen and felt, not in relation only to architecture, but to the glorious world of vale and mountain, field and forest, light and air. This picture has the earliest sunset in the National Gallery, and so far as that collection is concerned may be regarded as the starting-point of modern art.

In "The Blood of the Redeemer" (No. 1233), which is probably an even earlier work than "The Agony in the Garden," Giovanni Bellini, though in a more timid manner, shows his feeling for landscape and sky. This exquisite little work, finished like a miniature, with its

pitiful, pathetic, but noble figure of Christ willingly yielding His blood for the sins of the world, recalls Mantegna in the gilded bas reliefs, and even more in the angel with the corkscrew curls and dove-coloured tunic, and Crivelli, especially in the little red shoes, which are exactly the same fashion and colour as those of S. Cecilia in Crivelli's large altar-piece. Compare also the colour of the Baptist's mantle and the red of the Virgin's canopy, in No. 274, by Mantegna. This picture, though so early, is also characteristic of Bellini in its deep and gentle sentiment.

Andrea Mantegna, firmly pursuing his severer and more statuesque ideal, seldom gave way to the softer feelings, but he could be tender enough when he chose. This is seen very clearly in the loving, humble Virgin in the altar-piece "The Virgin and Child, enthroned, with S. John the Baptist and the Magdalen" (No. 274). It was the almost universal practice of the earlier Italian artists to endeavour to exalt the Virgin above her fellows by some sovereignty of mien, or, at least, some strangeness of form, but here she is distinguished by pure womanliness and simplicity. To the saints on either side of her, Mantegna has imparted all the stateliness of his most learned

style. He has chosen the finest models and clothed them with his most elaborate drapery, the innumerable folds of which are carefully arranged to express the beauty and dignity of their forms. They are like beautiful statues tinted with peculiar care. But the Virgin is a country girl of no particular beauty of feature or grace of form, just a young Italian mother, reminding us of the shy, sweet Madonnas of another North Italian artist, Ambrogio Borgognone of Milan (Nos. 298, 1077, and 1410). Of the stately magnificence of Mantegna's greater works, of his robuster realism, of his power in rendering passion and movement, of the richness and variety of his composition, of his extraordinary art in the decoration of large surfaces, of his skill in perspective and optical illusion, no impression can, of course, be obtained from this picture. For the most striking manifestations of his genius we must go to the church of the Eremitani at Padua, to the grandiose altar-piece at S. Zeno at Verona, to the ceiling of the Camera de' Sposi at Mantua, to the cartoon of the Triumph of Cæsar at Hampton Court, which even in its ruin preserves much of its original grandeur;* but within its

* A free version of part of it by Rubens is in the National Gallery, No. 278.

limits there is no more beautiful example of Mantegna's genius than this altar-piece. It has been said to be an early work of the artist, but there can be little doubt that it is one of his full maturity. The thorough command of the figure, the assured skill of its execution, and the unusual variety and beauty of its colour tell us this, while the signature with the initials C.P.F. (Civis Patavinus fecit) prove that it was painted after his settlement in Mantua in 1466.

Many of Mantegna's fine qualities not conspicuous in this altar-piece are to be seen in "The Triumph of Scipio" (No. 902) and the admirable drawing of "Samson and Delilah" (No. 1145). They are both *en grisaille*, and intended to imitate sculptured reliefs. Nothing can be finer in draughtsmanship and character than the "Samson and Delilah;" and "The Triumph of Scipio," or the reception of the Phrygian Mother of the Gods among the publicly recognised divinities of the Roman State, is remarkable for its strong dramatic conception and the completeness with which the incident is presented. We are informed by the catalogue that this picture was painted for a Venetian nobleman, Francesco Cornaro, who claimed to belong to the gens Cornelia. It

represents an incident in the life of his supposed ancestor, Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica, who, on account of his virtue, was selected to receive the deity (Cybele), whose presence was (according to the oracle) to drive Hannibal from Italy. "In the centre of the picture, Scipio, attended by other Romans and some Asiatics, is in the act of receiving the goddess. The sacred stone alleged to have fallen from heaven, and the image of the goddess, to give token of her presence, are borne on a litter. Claudia Quinta, a Roman lady sent with others in his company to receive the deity, has thrown herself before the image. Some slur had attached to her reputation, but she had proved her innocence by invoking the goddess mother, and drawing off from a shoal in the harbour of Ostia, with the aid of a slight rope merely, the vessel which bore the sacred image."

Here, at least, in the wild figure of Claudia welcoming with rapturous cries the goddess who had performed a miracle to attest her innocence, we have an example of Mantegna's power of representing violent passion and movement. The fury of this figure was admirably balanced by and contrasted with the noble groups of spectators.

These are comparatively calm, but yet animated by the excitement of the moment. Some watch in silence, others hold converse with fine gesture and expression. In some of the figures it is beauty that predominates; in others, character; but all are fine and drawn with perfect skill.

The picture is of special value historically, as it was completed in 1506, only a few months before the artist's death, at the age of seventy-five. There could be no surer testimony that Mantegna, like those other great and long-lived North Italian artists—Bellini, Titian, and Tintoretto—maintained his powers unimpaired to the last. The other picture (No. 1122) ascribed to Mantegna, with figures personifying Summer and Autumn, is of much beauty, and probably designed by the great artist; but the execution seems to betray another hand, skilful, indeed, but inferior to his own.

In his day, Mantegna had no rival, and at his death he left no great follower. Like Fra Angelico, he was the concluder of an epoch in art, rather than the inaugurator of a new one. Yet he had great influence upon his contemporaries, extending over a wide range, especially in North Italy. We may trace it, I think, in one at least (No. 803) of the two large altar-pieces by

the rare master, Marco Marziale (No. 804 is more Bellinesque), and in "The Virgin and Child" (No. 1134), and "The Death of Dido" (No. 1336), by Liberale da Verona. Other Veronese painters represented in the Gallery, Bonsignori and Niccolò Giolfino, came undoubtedly under his influence; but the closest following of him in the National collection is to be seen in the three little pictures by his second son, Francesco (Nos. 639, 1106, and 1381). Yet the influence of so great and original a genius never dies. Although none of his immediate successors may be strong enough to carry on his work, and though his career may seem to end in a *cul de sac*, he can never be really sterile, and as long as the love of noble art exists, the works of Andrea Mantegna will be sought and studied, and have their share in the development of genius and the education of the world.

CHAPTER IX.

UNDER THE SKY.

ROOM No. VII., which holds the pictures of the Venetian School, is the largest in the National Gallery. The wall space is demanded by the number and size of the pictures, but it is very appropriate to the pictures themselves and the School to which they belong. There is a loftiness of space and an amplitude of air suggested by the works of the painters of the north of Italy, which is felt even when they are compared with those of the Umbrian School with their beautiful and extensive landscape backgrounds. We not only see the sky, but feel in a greater measure that we are under it; we are more conscious of the sun, and of its effect in light, and shade, and colour. Nature which, ever since the days of Giotto, had been slowly leavening the dead mass of traditional art, now began to assert a supremacy, not only in sky and landscape, but also in the human figure.

Loosed from the bonds of ecclesiasticism, and to a great extent from that formalism engendered by the study of antique sculpture, the figures of art breath again with something of the freedom of nature, their limbs grow loose and supple, and their flesh glows with living blood. In other words, the Renaissance, both of Nature and Art, still gradually, but yet very swiftly, in comparison with its previous progress, reaches its culmination in painting. The gayest and most versatile of all the arts except poetry, springs into the fullest and most vigorous life that it has ever known, and is used to express all the emotions of human kind, but more especially the delights of beauty and the joys of life.

It is not without significance that the first independent landscape that we possess by an old master—the first admission that inanimate nature pure and simple is worth making a picture of—should be Venetian. Who painted it (No. 1298, "Landscape: River Scene") is not known, but it was no doubt some pupil of Giovanni Bellini, possibly Basaiti. Neither has the locality been ascertained. It is a view apparently suggested by some spur of the Eastern Alps, where a stream of considerable size winds its way among white

cliffs, and bears in its full season rafts of timber to the plain. In the left corner is the artist sketching, which is a sort of guarantee that he worked in the open air, and that he had been struck with the beauty of some such prospect. The fantastic forms of the cliffs, on the other hand, suggest that he was not content with the ordinary aspect of things, but desired to give them a touch of that wild and grotesque feeling which is so common in the landscape backgrounds of the old masters. He has, however, evidently felt the calm beauty of the scene, the tranquillity which falls upon the spirit in solitude amongst the hills. It is executed with great care, as though the artist was solicitous about the success of his daring essay, but it is marked with the caution of the pioneer. He has been so used to regard landscape as an accessory that he does not dare to paint it except from a distance, or on any but a minute scale, and he enlivens it with signs of human industry in the raft and the lime-kiln. It is as though a landscape had stepped out of the background of some old picture, and asserted its independence with fear and trembling.

The gradual advance of landscape to a more important share in composition, can nowhere be

better traced than in a room, filled like this with pictures of the Venetian School of the last half of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth. Very many years were still to pass before the example of this early Venetian painter was to be followed by the rise of a "landscape" school; but though we have no other pure landscape in this room, we see nature gradually making its way from background to foreground, from an accessory to a principal, till, in such a picture as Titian's "Bacchus and Ariadne" (No. 35), it becomes an inalienable part of the conception of the painter. It is not a mere piece of appropriate scenery, but is inspired throughout with the very moment of action, and is as essential as the figures themselves. Such perfect union of the drama and its surroundings has seldom been equalled, and in what may be called "dramatic landscape," where nature and human nature are blended by the force of the artist's imagination, Titian has few, if any, rivals. After such supreme union further progress in this direction could scarcely be expected, and the tendency was again to separation. But this time it was not the landscape which retreated; on the contrary, it continued its aggression until there was developed that distinct class of "landscape

and figures," which reached its culmination in Salvator Rosa the Italian and in the Poussins and Claude, who, though Frenchmen, fell into the procession of Italian art. Thus was generated that imposing "classical landscape" which regarded nature as the theatre of great historical and poetic events, and was cultivated by such moderns as Wilson and Turner, William Blake, John Linnell, and Samuel Palmer, not to mention later masters. Though in comparative disfavour now, it supplies a field for the imagination, which is not likely to be left long untilled. This was the direction which landscape took in Italy, far away from the simple, familiar, and not seldom bucolic backgrounds with which the earlier masters were wont to fill the interstices between their figures, with little regard to the main subject of the composition. It is in these backgrounds that we must seek the nearest affinities in Italian art to that modern landscape, based on the love of nature only, that "landscape for its own sake" which began with Rubens and Van Goyen, and has ever since been one of the most important branches of pictorial art.

It was about 1460 that Gentile and Giovanni Bellini, after spending their youth and early manhood with their father in Padua, are supposed to

have settled in Venice. Gentile was about thirty-four; Giovanni, thirty-two. Gentile, at least, soon found employment, for we know that in 1464 he received a commission to paint the organ shutters of S. Mark's with figures of saints, and a year later he painted the figure of the *Beato*, Lorenzo Giustiani, first patriarch of Venice, for the church of S. Maria dell' Orto; nor probably was Giovanni, the younger but greater genius of the two, less successful, for in 1464 we hear of his competing with Alvisé Vivarini and Carpaccio in the decorations for the *scuola* of S. Girolamo at Venice. It is there and elsewhere in the north of Italy that the great works of these painters must be studied. By Alvisé there is nothing at the National Gallery; by Gentile, who spent a good many years at the court of the Sultan at Constantinople, there are one or two portraits only, and of Carpaccio but one example. The greatest works of Gentile, a series of pictures in the Hall of the Great Council at Venice, were destroyed by fire in 1577.

Carpaccio assisted him at their beginning in 1474, and they were continued by Giovanni when Gentile went to Constantinople in 1479, and were completed by the brothers on Gentile's return to Venice. The few important pictures by Gentile

which remain, "S. Mark preaching at Alexandria," in the Brera at Milan, "The Miracle of the True Cross," and the "Procession of Corpus Domini" (both in the Venice Academy), show that his talent lay in the realistic presentation of historical events. His grand compositions, filled with imposing architecture and numerous figures in rich and strange costumes, are elaborate, picturesque, and decorative, treating history, from the familiar and scenic, rather than the imaginative and emotional side. By such works he broke away from the traditions of the earlier art of Venice and inaugurated a new *genre*, which his pupil and assistant Carpaccio was to develop with a richer imagination and a more tender feeling for romance.

The development of Giovanni was in quite a different direction. Though alive to the spirit of the Renaissance, and occasionally, as in the remarkable little pictures in the Academy at Venice, of "Venus," the "Car of Bacchus," "Truth," etc., choosing classical and allegorical subjects with nude figures, he worked mainly for the Church. But his long life was marked by a constant advance in landscape, in portraiture, in colour and general professional skill. He learnt from his numerous pupils almost as much as he

taught them, so that, in spite of the great progress in technique and freedom of treatment which had taken place since his youth, Albert Dürer was able to say of him, in 1506, when he was about eighty years old, that he was still "the best in painting" of the artists of Venice. But while he was thus so proficient in craftsmanship, he was even still more unrivalled in the spiritual beauty and dignity of his conceptions. His Madonnas, though never transcending nature through exaggeration or affectation, maintain their high distinction by a sweet and noble dignity which breathes from them, and can only be felt. His holy children are conceived in the same vein of exalted naturalism, and his saints, male and female, while often of great physical grace and beauty, are even yet more remarkable for their refinement of spiritual character. Nor has any one surpassed him in the pathetic grandeur of his type of Christ, or the exquisite beauty of his boy angels. However exalted in sentiment, his figures, even his most divine personages, are living presences; however human, they are stamped with nobility.

The development of Giovanni's genius, and of the art of Venetian painting generally, received a

great impulse from the introduction of the Flemish method of painting in oil. This event is generally supposed to have happened about 1473, when the Sicilian painter Antonello da Messina settled in Venice. He was then, according to latest conjecture, about nine and twenty, and had already attained some position as an artist in his native place. According to Vasari, he paid a visit to Flanders, and learnt the secret of oil-painting from John Van Eyck; but this is contradicted by dates. According to others, he learnt it from Memling; but now the theory of the journey to Flanders has been given up, as it is quite possible that he may have learnt it from one of several Flemish painters (including Memling) who are known to have visited Italy. We are fortunate in possessing four pictures by this interesting artist, and among them that which bears the earliest date of any of his works. This is "Christ as the Saviour: Salvator Mundi" (No. 673), which is dated 1465, or some eight years before the artist's migration to Venice. It is in oil, but evidently the work of a beginner—stiff, and poorly modelled—but clearly indicative that his master was a Fleming. The arrangement, simple as it is here, evidently caused him much trouble. The right hand and the tunic

have been repainted over the original design, which reappears through the later painting—one of the most patent instances of what are called "pentimenti." In the "Portrait of a Young Man" (No. 1141), he has attained complete mastery over his materials and other technical difficulties. In the strength of its character, in its forcible but delicate modelling, and its rich and transparent colour, it is on a level with the best work of the kind, and should be compared with those wonderful portraits by Solario (Nos. 734 and 923), which are, no doubt, themselves signs of the wonderful influence which Antonello exerted over portrait-painting in Venice. If, as there is good reason for believing, the "Young Man" is Antonello himself, it shows clearly how great a progress he made in the few years which elapsed between the painting of the "Salvator Mundi" and this portrait. Unfortunately, it is not dated, but if it really represents the artist, it must have been painted about the same time as the very interesting "Crucifixion" (No. 1166), which is dated 1477. In this curious little work, so simple and strange in its pathos, so unlovely in its types, so patiently minute in its execution, there is little to tell of purely Venetian influences. It recalls Mantegna

rather than Bellini; and its feeling is more Flemish than Italian. The little interior with S. Jerome, lately added from the collection of Lord Northbrook (No. 1418), and one of the most exquisite examples of miniature painting, has, however, little to remind us of Flanders, except its abundant detail and minute finish.

The effect of Antonello's appearance in Venice seems to have been immediate. All artists appear to have abandoned tempera for the richer and more pellucid medium as soon as possible. Giovanni Bellini was one of the first to adopt it. His latest work in tempera was an altar-piece, painted in 1472, which was burnt in 1867 in the church of S. Giovanni e Paolo, at Venice, at the same time as Titian's "Peter Martyr." All the works in the National Gallery by Giovanni, or ascribed to him, are in oil, with the exception of the "Blood of the Redeemer" and the "Agony in the Garden," which have been described in the previous chapter. Of these the finest and the least open to suspicion are the bust portrait of the "Doge Leonardo Loredano, in his state robes" (No. 187), and the "Madonna and Child" (No. 280). To the latter it is difficult to assign a date, but the portrait of the Doge must have been

executed between 1501—when Loredano assumed the office of Doge—and 1516, when the painter died. It is one of the best known of his works, and one of the most admirable of his portraits, stamped with the courage and dignity of the great character who steered the Republic through the stormiest and most depressing period of its history —the wars of the League of Cambray—when Pope and Emperor, France and Spain combined together to destroy its power, for a while deprived it of all its possessions on the continent of Italy, and impoverished it beyond recovery. Though the portrait has not escaped entirely from the hand of the restorer, it is in good condition, and shows the combined firmness and delicacy of the artist's handling, and that beautiful, clear, light golden or honey-like tone which distinguishes the work of himself and his older followers from the deeper and warmer flesh tints of Titian and Giorgione.

"The Madonna and Child" (No. 280) has unfortunately turned rather black in the shadows; but nothing mars the sweet dignity of the mother, or the noble simplicity of the child with its wistful eyes and chestnut locks. Both are so near to nature that it is difficult to see how the artist has

stamped them with a more than common grandeur, and yet there is not in the Gallery any version of this often-repeated motive which appeals more strongly to our reverence. With the exception of the Madonna di San Sisto, it is doubtful whether Raphael, with all his grace and noble idealism, ever succeeded in inspiring this subject with such spiritual force. But the force here is not only spiritual; the type of the Virgin is high, intellectually and physically, such as belongs only to the noblest order of womanhood. The little strips of landscape on either side of the canopy should not be missed, with their glimpses of hill and mountain and subtly shaded clouds, which are in themselves sufficient to authenticate the picture. It is not a little to be grateful for in these days, when every picture has to render an account of itself before the formidable tribunal of an art scholarship more minute and thorough than has ever existed before, that our National Gallery possesses four pictures by Giovanni Bellini whose claims are universally admitted. Two of them ("The Blood of the Redeemer" and "The Agony in the Garden") are indeed early works, but they are of much beauty and of extreme interest, and the others are mature and of their class scarcely

to be excelled. Besides these we have three other pictures ascribed by the catalogue to Giovanni Bellini, to which modern criticism has not been quite so kind.*

One of these is the "S. Peter Martyr" (No. 808), which, in spite of its signature, *Joannes Bellinus, pinxit*, is now generally considered to be by his elder brother, Gentile; and another is, "Landscape, with the death of S. Peter Martyr, 1252" (No. 812), which is signed *Joannes Bellinus, ft.*, and has been ascribed by different authorities to Bellini, to Catena, to Rocco Marconi, and perhaps other artists. With regard to the "S. Peter Martyr," there appears to be no doubt that the signature has been tampered with, and that its colouring and handling are characteristic of Gentile rather than of Giovanni. Nor is this to be regretted. We can afford to lose a doubtful Giovanni for a real Gentile, which, with the assistance of another example of this rare master, "(Supposed) portrait of Girolamo Malatini, Professor of Mathematics at Venice" (No. 1213), affords at least some taste of his quality and

* To the Bellinis must now be added the well-known "Circumcision," lately belonging to the Earl of Carlisle, and a very fine "S. Dominic"—which may be by the same hand as "S. Peter Martyr," but is very much finer.

some slight guide in discriminating between his hand and that of his brother. Unfortunately, there is not the same consolation in the case of the landscape with the "Death of Peter Martyr," but it is still by no means proved that this remarkable picture is not by the hand of Giovanni. The principal figures are not, indeed, worthy of his reputation, but they have been so repainted that the original handling has been obliterated, and the subject was not well suited to display the genius of Giovanni, whose greatness lay in the quiet development of character and sentiment, and not in dramatic force and strong action. On the other hand, if the landscape be not by Giovanni, it is difficult to assign it to any of his followers.

The distance, with its town upon the hill, the road with its wayside well, its peasants, and its cattle, though distinctly Bellinesque, is such as many artists of his school have introduced into their pictures, but the cool, diffused light of the picture, with its soft but luminous sky, and subdued but harmonious colour, are less easy to match. Still more remarkable, perhaps, is the dense wood, with its carefully drawn stems and branches, and its leafage so elegantly grouped

and beautifully lighted. On the whole, I do not think that there is any reason to abandon the ascription in the catalogue, but in any case the picture is specially interesting as showing the advance (made chiefly by Bellini) towards a truer rendering of the general effect of masses of foliage. Each leaf is still drawn distinctly, but the impossibility of representing all the visible leaves upon a tree is evaded by making them fewer and larger than in nature. The picture may be regarded as a halfway house, so to speak, between the crude conventions of an earlier art and the broader generalizations of Titian. It shows also some, if not an equal, advance towards that dramatic unity between the landscape and the subject attained by the latter master. The scene is more than usually appropriate to the incident depicted, but has otherwise no connection with the principal action. The woodmen and the shepherd pursue their avocations undisturbed by the tragedy that is being enacted within a few yards of them. The artist has, indeed, been careful to make them all look in every direction but the right one, but he has ignored the fact that the slightest cry on the part of the victims must have attracted their attention.

The third of the doubtful Bellinis is the pathetic and exquisitely finished but rather effeminate head of Christ, called "Ecce Homo" (No. 1310), which is more probably by Cima da Conegliano, who painted between 1489 and 1517. How like it is in type and expression to this artist may be seen by comparing it with the heads (not only that of Christ, but of other figures, especially that on Christ's left) in the large composition of "The Incredulity of Thomas" (No. 618), which was ordered in 1497 by the Fraternita dei Battuti for the altar of the church of San Francesco at Portogruaro, and finished in 1504.

This is our most important if not most beautiful example of this delightful painter, who, though following his master Bellini very closely, had yet a very distinct character of his own, which renders his genuine pictures easily distinguishable. Among his peculiarities are the light golden tone of his flesh tints, the gaiety and transparency of his colour, the cheerful expression of his holy infants (his Madonnas are generally cheerful also, as in No. 300, but sometimes have a graver cast, as in No. 634), the deep-socketed eyes and low eyebrows in some of his male heads, the contrast between the fairness of the flesh and the comparative

darkness of the eyes, which appear as if without lashes. His pictures are also distinguished by the beauty of the landscape backgrounds. These generally consist of deep prospects with blue mountains in the distance, the nearer hills being studded with houses, castles, and other buildings in great variety of style. Amongst those in No. 634, the ruins of a Roman temple are introduced on the left. His Madonnas, though they have not the nobility of Bellini's, possess a sweet and flowerlike charm and daintiness by which they may claim kinship with those of Raphael. His infant Christs blend sweet naturalness with distinction of type, every member being moulded with great care, and there is always a happy accord between the mother and child in both form and sentiment. If not inspired by intensity of feeling or a very lofty ideal, they are raised above ordinary humanity by the fine selection of a grave and graceful fancy. His personality is more distinct and delightful than that of Marco Basaiti, who is said to have been born of Greek parents. His first appearance in history is as an assistant of Alvise Vivarini, but he may be regarded as belonging to the School of Bellini. His works date from 1500 to after 1521. A small but

characteristic example of him is presented in the "S. Jerome reading," which should be compared with the rendering of the same subject by Cima. In both we have much the same brilliant and transparent colour, but in the Basaiti, the landscape with its stern rocks is more in accordance with traditional treatment. Still more brilliant, perhaps the most brilliant of all contemporary pictures in the Gallery, is "The Infant Christ asleep in the lap of the Virgin." This has been regarded as a work by another and more versatile artist, Vincenzo de Biagio, commonly called Catena, mainly on account of the mould of the child and the crinkled cast of the drapery. The child certainly resembles a type employed by Catena,* as may be seen by comparing it with that in the "A Warrior adoring the Infant Christ" (No. 234), a work the authorship of which has been much disputed. For safety's sake, it is described in the catalogue as of the School of Bellini, but there is little doubt that it is a late work of Catena. The child in the larger picture is so greatly inferior to that in No. 599, that it is almost incredible that both should

* It is also very like that in "The Circumcision" (No. 1455) from Castle Howard, a picture which recalls Catena, and other pupils of Bellini, as well as Bellini himself.

be by the same hand, and neither the type of child nor the crinkled cast of the drapery are the exclusive property of Catena, but may be seen in the works of Bellini himself as well as of others. On the other hand, there can be no question about the landscape, which is totally different in character and execution to that of the picture ascribed to Basaiti. In general character it is Bellinesque, and in many ways resembles that in "Landscape, with the Death of Peter Martyr," already described, but the peculiar form and ramifications of the trees are alone sufficient to declare its separate authorship. In No. 599 the trunks divide into two stems of equal thickness, which form a V, and this simple convention is followed in the smaller boughs. It shows plainly the difficulty of determining the precise authorship of the works of the School of Bellini, that this marked peculiarity and other features of the landscape of No. 599 are present in the landscape background of a large picture of a saint, which has been exhibited twice in recent years. This picture is ascribed to Cima, and there is an undoubted picture by this artist, in which the figure of the saint is practically identical. The confusion is mainly accounted for by the fact that Bellini in the course of his long

life employed many of the best artists of the day —Cima, Basaiti, Catena, Rondinelli, and others in executing the pictures commissioned from his *bottega.* This accounts for many pictures which bear his cartellino, and are not now recognised as by his hand. It also accounts for similar landscape backgrounds to figures by different artists. They would appear to have used each other's landscape studies, even if they did not paint each other's backgrounds. Such strong characteristics as those noted in the background of No. 599 are not, however, likely to have been imitated, and there seems no reason for supposing that more than one hand was employed on this beautiful picture, the main fault of which is the insipidity of the Virgin. The landscape is altogether interesting, and will well repay a long examination. The incident of the bird and the serpent should not be missed, and the eastern sheep with the long ears and its stately attendant in the white burnous, should be noted as an attempt to give some Oriental character to the scene.

Till recent years the name of Catena was seldom heard, but he is now regarded as one of the most able of the assistants and followers of Giovanni Bellini. In the ardour of discovery, some experts

appear to have got "Catena on the brain," and to have assigned works to him right and left without sufficient consideration. In the National Gallery alone, at least, five pictures have at different times and by different authorities been assigned to this ubiquitous Catena. These are Nos. 812, 234, 694, 599, and 1160. Of these assignations two only, I think, can be fully trusted. These are 234, "A Warrior adoring the Infant Christ," and 694, "S. Jerome in his Study." The former of these is probably the masterpiece of the painter. The chief difficulty in accepting it as his is the strength and solidity of the kneeling figure of the knight, with its rich full colour glowing almost as Giorgione, and brushed with breadth and mastery. There is boldness and character also in the tree and bushes behind the wall, and these portions of the picture contrast so strongly with the cruder colours and the more cramped execution of the holy family, as to justify a suspicion that they are by a different hand. The discrepancy, however, is partly explained, if we regard Catena as a painter of little original genius, but of much skill and adaptability, who took colour, so to speak, from the more powerful minds with which he worked, and was capable of following both

Bellini and Giorgione and Titian to a certain distance. The influence of all these artists may be discerned in this work. It is Bellini only (to whom the picture was once ascribed) that he has followed in the lovely picture of "S. Jerome in his Study." If the other be his masterpiece, in the sense of showing larger powers, this is a work more perfect in itself. There is a unity and completeness in the whole conception and execution of the scene which leave little to be desired. His period of penitence over, the saint is seated in the study of the monastery which he built at Bethlehem, reading intently, and engaged perhaps in his translation of the Scriptures (the Vulgate). The sense of retirement and peace is perfectly given, and is undisturbed even by the presence of his lion, his dog, and his partridge, who are enjoying a luxurious leisure. His figure is beautiful and full of serene dignity, as he sits absorbed in his book with his slender hand raised to his forehead. The colour is pure, bright, and clear, and the details are all painted with such truth and care that they might suggest the head of a Fleming, except that no regard is paid to the reflection of colour. It will be observed that his cardinal's hat is blue, instead of the usual red.

Another picture, ascribed by Morelli and others to Catena, is "The Adoration of the Magi" (No. 1160), which is labelled "School of Barbarelli" (Giorgione). Why the ascription to the School of Giorgione should have been derided by Morelli, I do not understand. The picturesque soldiers on the left are clearly derived from him, and the general warm suffusion of the colour and the types of the figures are more characteristic of what may be called his "school" than of that of Bellini. Whoever painted it, it is worth many much larger canvases. The simple, flowing cast of the drapery, the general scheme of colour and the quality of individual tints, such as the mellow yellow shaded with red, and the greenish-blue of the Virgin's mantle, are not like what I know of Catena. The lively, well-drawn child, with its supple limbs; the faces of the women, with full faces, short noses, and square jaws; the straight-necked horses, and many other things in this charming picture seem to me to proclaim a distinct, if unknown, master.* Above all things distinct, perhaps, is the particular tone of reverence, naïve, quiet but deep, that pervades the picture, a feeling which can scarcely have been

* He probably painted No. 1173, described in the next chapter.

imitated, but must have proceeded from the very character of the painter himself. There was a picture, evidently by the same hand, in the winter exhibition at the New Gallery, which was also ascribed to Catena by some critics who have, perhaps, a greater claim to authority than myself in such a matter. Nevertheless, I remain unconvinced, although it may be taken as proved that this artist was singularly versatile, and that there is an extraordinary difference between his best and worst work.

CHAPTER X.

THE FULNESS OF LIFE.

THE change that Giovanni Bellini wrought in the art of Venice can be partially estimated in the National Gallery by a comparison between his own earlier and later work—between, for instance, "The Agony in the Garden" and "The Blood of the Redeemer," on the one hand, and the head of the Doge Loredano, "The Madonna and Child," and the background of "Landscape, with the Death of Peter Martyr," on the other.

A still more striking development was achieved by his two pupils, Giorgione and Titian. The works of the Bellini, the Vivarini, and their pupils, to whom the last chapter was devoted—Cima, Basaiti, Catena, etc.—have yet, despite their differences, much in common that divides their work generally from those of the later artists in the room, whether these belong to the strictly Venetian School, like Palma, Bonifazio, and Cariani, or to

the other allied northern schools of Bergamo, Brescia, and Verona, like Romanino, Moretto, and Paolo Veronese.

In their work, the old ideal of shapes, modelled with the precision and almost the hardness of sculpture, is more or less preserved; their figures and their drapery stand out clear-cut from the background; the flesh, though beautiful and luminous, has the texture of a harder substance, as of ivory; and its colour, ranging from amber to brown, wants the warmth of real flesh. Though an advance is made in uniting the figures with the background, it is seldom more than halfway. The effect of brilliant sunshine is given, but the masses of colour in the foreground are still isolated, with little more regard to the real truths of illumination than will secure the necessary relief and separation, and with no regard whatever to reflection of colour.

In a word, there is a want of fusion both in colour and composition. In all we see distinctly the elements out of which the work is constructed —the drawing of the figures, the design of the landscape, the adjustment of one to the other, and, last of all, the colouring; all orderly, beautiful, methodical workmanship, dexterous exceedingly,

and lovely in result—but yet, regarded as workmanship only, cold withal, the calm execution of a well-calculated plan, transmitting, as through some neutral medium, the imagination of the artist. To these painters, the brush was an instrument, rather than an organ, of expression.

But to Giorgione and Titian it was almost as a voice, vibrating with the artist's feeling, and glowing with his imagination. With them began a new era of painting: of bolder handling, of richer, warmer colouration, in which the masses, though still kept large and distinct, were broken and gradated with infinite subtlety, and were blended in one harmonious scheme, of which the dominant tone was gold or silver—gold generally in the Venetian pictures, silver in those of the other schools. Giorgione (as Giorgio Barbarelli is generally called) was slightly the elder of Titian (Tiziano Vecellio), who was born in 1477, or about fifty years after the Bellini. Giorgione died in 1511—one of those great Italian artists, like Masaccio and Raphael, who found a few years long enough to achieve a deathless fame. Titian lived on till the 27th of August, 1576, preserving his wonderful faculties almost unimpaired to the end, and then (in his ninety-ninth or hundredth year) succumbing only to the plague.

The reputation and influence of Giorgione appears all the more remarkable when we read the short list of the works he is known to have executed, and the still shorter one of those which yet survive. The frescoes with which he adorned his own house, and, in company with his fellow-pupil, Titian, the *façade* of the Fondaco de' Tedeschi at Venice, have perished, and almost the only altar-piece which he is known to have executed is that which still remains in the parish church of his birthplace, Castelfranco. Till comparatively recent years, the only other works which could be confidently ascribed to his hand were the "Three Philosophers," now in the Belvedere at Vienna, and the small picture known as "La Famiglia di Giorgione," in the Giovanelli Palace at Venice. To these have now been added the "Sleeping Venus," in the Dresden Gallery—the greatest of all Morelli's discoveries; the "Concert," in the Louvre; a "Madonna and Child, with Saints," in the Madrid Gallery; the "Trial by Fire" and "Judgment of Solomon" (both small and early), and the "Knight of Malta," in the Uffizi; the "Shepherd," at Hampton Court, and a few other pictures and portraits, numbering, all told, about twenty works by this rare and

fascinating master, and the claims of some of these, as the "Shepherd," are still disputed. The period of his full power is estimated by Morelli at six years only—the last six in his life, from 1505 to 1511.

With Giorgione begins the true language of the brush, in which every touch is like a word recording spontaneously—almost unconsciously—some quite personal feeling of the artist. With an unusually perfect perception and enjoyment of sensuous beauty, but with a noble disposition and unsullied mind, no one felt more than he the full delight of existence. Formed by nature for a lyrical and idyllic poet, rapt with the essential loveliness of the world, his great artistic gifts enabled him to express his sensations with a directness and simplicity seldom, if ever, equalled. It may be safely said that no one has ever set down so freshly, and yet so completely, the impressions of sight upon the mind. His art was so concealed, that it has every appearance of artlessness, without a trace of anxiety as to the result of his labour. Unconsciousness on the part of the artist and his human subjects is perhaps the keynote of his work. His figures have no obvious relation to each other, and their

employment is dubious and accidental; the composition of his pictures seems undesigned, the whole purport of them often unintelligible. But this very want of coherence is fascinating and enjoyable as Nature herself. Even when a set composition was necessary, as in the altar-piece at Castelfranco, he bound it together—effectually, it is true, but—with the slenderest and most invisible of threads. He isolates his figures; the Virgin and Child on a throne of unusual loftiness, high against the sky, her feet above the heads of the saints that stand on the terrace below; the saints—Francis and Liberale—stand with their backs to the throne and their faces to the spectator, alone with their own thoughts. The Virgin is gentle, meditative, noble, and holds her child on her knee with a mother's loose but careful hand. Her divinity is scarcely expressed, but it is felt, and the saints are simple and noble—human beings unconscious of any superior merit of their own. So, without either idealism or strongly marked character, and knitting his composition partly by the simplest arrangement of line, but more by unity of feeling and harmony of colour, Giorgione succeeded in producing an impression not less powerful, or solemn, but more

charming than art had ever given before. The originality and purity of his mind are strongly attested by his "Sleeping Venus" at Dresden, a subject which tests nobility more, perhaps, than any other. Like Titian's (till lately more celebrated) Venus at Florence, the figure is nude and reclining—woman only, but, unlike Titian's, it is so spiritualised by refinement of form as to raise the vision high above the level of animalism. Even here he does not appear as an idealist, in the sense of an inventor of forms to express abstract ideas. He was like Coleridge's child, that "always finds but never seeks," the first of "poetic realists" who do not go outside nature for beauty, because they find more of it within her than they can reveal with all their pains.

If what I have written expresses even imperfectly the characteristics of Giorgione, his extraordinary influence on art is amply accounted for, especially if we remember that there was no one like him before, or has been no one like him since.

But if his originality was great, his peculiarities were easily caught, and therefore it is very difficult to assert confidently whether this or that work is really by his own hand, especially if, as most of the doubtful works are, it is overcleaned

or repainted. The difficulty of imperfect preservation does not, however, exist in regard to the only picture ascribed to Giorgione in the National Gallery, "A Knight in Armour" (No. 269). This picture is beautiful in colour, and, as far as the armour is concerned, very carefully finished. It bears so strong a resemblance to the figure of S. Liberale in the Castelfranco altar-piece that, till recent years, it has always been accepted as the original study for that figure by Giorgione himself. This theory has been discarded by some very competent critics, mainly, it would appear, on the grounds that it is too highly finished for an original sketch, and that there are certain differences between the two. The figure at Castelfranco wears his helmet, that in the National Gallery is bareheaded. There are differences also in the position of the hands, which are not so refined and slender in the study as in the picture. These objections are by no means conclusive if taken by themselves. There is nothing unusual in the finish of No. 269, if it is regarded as a study of armour, and the other differences are rather on the side of its originality. It is at least as reasonable to suppose that the alterations were made by the artist when painting his

picture, as by another when copying it. The less refined form of hand can be most easily explained by his adhering in the study to the form of his model. Whether the execution of our little picture is Giorgione's or not (and is any one quite competent to decide that question?), there can, I think, be little doubt that it is a study, or a copy of a study, for the Castelfranco altar-piece, and therefore brings us nearer to the great artist than any other work in the Gallery.

Of the influence, more or less remote, of Giorgione, in colour and feeling, in subject-picture or portrait, in figure and landscape, there are abundant traces in the works of Titian, Lotto, and others of his contemporaries in the Gallery, and in the three unascribed pictures, Nos. 930, 1160, and 1173. These are certainly not by Giorgione, but they are all more or less Giorgionesque. Of the second, No. 1160, I have already said something; the first, "The Garden of Love," is interesting mainly as an example of a class of composition of which Giorgione must be regarded as the inventor—a pleasant landscape, with scattered groups of young men and women in careless enjoyment of existence. The third, "An Unknown Subject," is probably by the same artist

as No. 1160, and has far greater fascination on account of its refinement and beauty, the richness of its fancy, and, not least, by reason of the inscrutability of its subject. In this respect, as in others, it is characteristic of Giorgione, reminding one of "The Three Sages" and the "Family of Giorgione," though some more coherent thought seems to underlie the whole composition. Who is this striking figure, crowned with olive and seated on a throne in the midst of a beautiful garden? A child stands bare-headed before him, a youth plays music, and another kneels to offer him fruit; there is a peacock on a dead branch, and a panther playing on the lawn. In the midst of all he sits melancholy and unmoved. Is he meant for some intellectual Dives, learning too late that happiness exists not in luxury or knowledge? Is he the poet, musing in sadness and mental solitude on the mysteries of life, who cannot taste of its fruit or listen to its music, unconscious of the brute forces symbolised by the panther, and the vanity of human pride imaged by the peacock on the dead branch; or is he the philosopher imparting wisdom to the young? What matter, the picture charms like nature, because we cannot fathom it.

Another work once ascribed to Giorgione (probably on account of the unusual glow of its flesh-tints) is "Venus and Adonis" (No. 1123). The disposition of the limbs of Venus and the careless fling of the drapery may also have recalled the woman in the so-called "Family of Giorgione." Other critics have discovered in it the hand of Titian, and suggested that it is an early work of that master. It has certainly more affinity with Titian than Giorgione, but it is difficult to believe that the mind that was capable of so much nobler a conception of the subject as No. 34, should have imagined this. Parts of the picture, especially the Cupid and the draperies, are charming, the colour rich, glowing, and splendid, and if its reputation was once unduly high, it seems now in danger of being equally depreciated.

Of a very different temperament to Giorgione, Titian shares with him in the great development of the art of painting at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Giorgione's influence on Titian was very great; he has even been called his master; but there seems to be no sufficient ground for supposing that one of these great artists and fellow-students contributed much more than the other to the general progress of painting, whereas

the imagination of Titian was too powerful to be greatly deflected by another, which, if more refined, was not so strong as his own. As Morelli has well said, the genius of Titian was essentially dramatic, while that of Giorgione was lyrical. There is little of the contemplative or subjective in Titian's pictures; these are always full of life, often of strong action; but however animated the movement of his figures, as in the "Bacchus and Ariadne," they are always restrained from violence by a fine sense of artistic propriety. In certain directions, in the direction especially of such compositions as this, Art has never gone farther. In ardour, grace, and movement, the figure of Bacchus flinging himself from his car, with his crimson mantle flying behind him, has never been excelled. In the unity of the landscape with the figures (of which I have already written in my last chapter), in the richness and variety of the groups of the god's followers, the most beautiful, the most animated, the most humorous, and the least offensive of all conceptions of Bacchic riot, the same may be said. Of the strength and magnificence of its colour, so infinitely and subtly varied, and so completely harmonious, it is not necessary to enlarge; I would only direct attention to the red

BACCHUSAND ARIADNE.—*Titian.*

scarf of Ariadne, which appears so distinct from all the other colours, and yet knits them all together, cutting like a thread athwart the various blues of sky and sea and distance, and enforcing their subtle differences, while it escapes from conflict even with the crimson mantle of Bacchus. It is surely the most wonderful "bit of red" in the world.

It is somewhat difficult, from interior evidence, to fix the dates of Titian's pictures, but we know that the "Bacchus and Ariadne" was executed in the year 1514, and that it was one of a series of pictures of poetical subjects that were painted for Alfonzo I., the Duke of Ferrara, two others of which, the "Sacrifice to the Goddess of Festivity" and the "Bacchanal," are now among the forty-two pictures by this artist at Madrid. Though Titian went on painting all through his long life with little failure of power, he had, like all men, a period when his fancy was most fertile, his imagination most lively, when, in the triumphant exercise of his newly perfected skill, he felt, created, and painted with a vigour and passion not afterwards to be attained. This period of vital poetic energy dated from about the time of Giorgione's death in 1511, and lasted for some five or six years, during which he painted the pictures

just mentioned, and amongst others the "Sacred and Profane Love" in the Borghese Palace at Rome, the most beautiful of all, a work which Sir Frederick Burton rightly regards as "a union of poetry and painting such as the world of art cannot elsewhere show." This was possibly the period also of the "Tribute Money" of the Dresden Gallery, and of the greatest of his religious pictures now existing, the glorious "Assumption of the Virgin," painted in 1516 for the church of the Frari at Venice, and now in the Academy there. This was the year in which his master Bellini died, and he completed his unfinished pictures, as he had completed those of his fellow-pupil Giorgione five years before. Thenceforth he was the undoubted chief of the artists of Venice, to be rivalled only later by his great followers Tintoretto and Paolo Veronese.

This period may be called the second period of Titian. He was sent to Venice when ten years old, or about 1487, and at a date not precisely ascertained entered the School of the Bellini. Whether he had other masters, or whether he was more especially the pupil of Gentile or Giovanni, has been disputed, but this is a matter of little consequence, for the companionship of Giorgione

his fellow-student counts for more in his development than the influence of any master. We know little of the works of either till we find them both engaged on those frescoes outside the Fondaeo de' Tedeschi at Venice, which are now entirely lost except for the faint records of Zanetti, who etched what remained of them in the last century. Of the other young artists at Venice at this time, the most important in relation to Titian was Jacopo Palma (known as Palma Vecchio, 1480 (?)–1528). He, too, felt deeply the golden influence of Giorgione, and also that of Titian, and developed into a fine artist, next in rank to those supreme painters, whom he now and then even rivalled, as in the noble figure of S. Barbara, in S. Maria Formosa, at Venice. Of this exquisite colourist and splendid painter of the golden-haired beauties of Venice, we have only one example—the fine "Portrait of a Poet" (No. 636), formerly ascribed to Titian, and showing traces of the influence not only of him, but of Giorgione and Bellini. Its refined melancholy recalls so much the feeling which emanates from many of the heads of Christ as treated by artists of the time, that one is not surprised to find that it has been used by another artist for a "Salvator Mundi" (see Catalogue).

As Titian was probably a few years older than Palma, and Titian was the greater genius, it is reasonable to suppose that any likeness discernible in the earlier works of these painters is due to the influence of the elder. The argument from age is, however, a very doubtful one taken by itself, as we see in the case of Giorgione; and whether Titian influenced Palma, or Palma, Titian, need not disturb our interest in the undoubted fact that the earlier works of both show that they were working as youths in a common artistic atmosphere. An assurance of this is afforded by the earliest work by Titian in the National Gallery, "A Holy Family," with a shepherd adoring (No. 4). In this the Virgin and the colour of her drapery are more characteristic of Palma than of Titian. This part of the picture has suffered from the hands of the cleaner, and is now (especially the red and blue of the Virgin's robes) out of tone with the rest of the picture. The head of S. Joseph has also suffered, but his robe and the figure of the shepherd are still in beautiful condition, and show how finely Titian could paint even before he reached the full maturity of his power. The kinship of this picture with the work of Palma, is difficult to illustrate

in a Gallery which contains no work of the latter except a portrait, but some suggestion of it may be found if we compare this picture by Titian with the works of two of Palma's pupils which the Gallery contains, "The Madonna and Child, with Saints" (No. 1202), by Bonifazio Veronese, and the picture with the same title (No. 1203) by Cariani. This picture by Titian is the only one in the Gallery which can with any safety be ascribed to his first period, that is, before the death of Giorgione, when he was working more or less in fellowship with him, and it seems, at first, somewhat strange that the spirit of Giorgione, though clear enough, does not pervade it so completely as many of Titian's later works. But from those of other artists, like Lotto, it would seem that, however much Giorgione was appreciated in those few years in which he produced his finest pictures, it was not till after his death that his full influence was felt, even by his own generation, and that this was the case even with Titian should not cause surprise. The true quality of a genius so original and shortlived as that of Giorgione, is not to be determined during the few years of its dazzling course; it too often needs the sunset and the afterglow to show the

glory and the strength of the luminary we have lost.

The other Holy Family of Titian in the Gallery, "The Madonna and Child, with S. John the Baptist and S. Catherine embracing the Divine Infant" (No. 635), gives an opportunity of comparing his earlier and later styles. In this beautiful work, so rich and original in colour, so animated in the figures (especially in the affectionate rapture of S. Catherine), with its rich, broadly-treated landscape, and, not least, the lovely type of the Madonna (a type especially his own), we see his powers in full maturity. Here the landscape and figures, if to a less extent than in the "Bacchus and Ariadne," are well united and compact in composition, and the arrangement of light and shade is as careful and effective as that of the colour. It is not known when it was painted, but it was once in the Escurial, and was perhaps one of the many works which Titian executed for his Imperial patrons, Charles V. and Philip II. If this be the case, it must have been painted after 1530, the year in which he was first summoned to the presence of Charles V., then at Bologna, to paint his portrait. Also, at a date unknown, but probably after No. 4, and before any other of his

pictures here, he painted the "Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene after His Resurrection," commonly called "Noli me Tangere," a picture deservedly celebrated for the expressive gesture of the figures, the beauty of its sycamore tree and landscape, and its excellent preservation. This picture, from its earliness and the simplicity of its subject, is a good one to compare with those of Bellini and his earlier pupils. Though the landscape is composed of elements very similar to those used by them—a hill with buildings and a distant country—it is treated with a breadth unknown before Giorgione, whose influence it shows also, according to Dr. Richter, in the slender types of the figures. We see also that the desire for intense facial expression and strongly marked character is gone, the feeling of the incident is more widely spread over the composition, and is suggested in the figures more by the general action of the whole body—by the shrinking of Christ, the eager gesture of Mary. The advance in chiaroscuro and fusion of colour is equally strongly marked. If we test it, on the other hand, by the works of lesser luminaries of his time, we shall see that it is marked by the nobility of its feeling and its imaginative grasp, not descending to mere luxury of colour or

triviality of sentiment. These great qualities, though they may have failed him in his over-praised "Venus" in the Uffizi, enabled him to treat such a subject as "Venus and Adonis" (No. 34) with a power and dignity of style which no one has equalled. Of the many repetitions of this favourite subject of his, ours is not perhaps the finest, but it is fine enough to compel a warm admiration.

The long life of Titian appears to have been one of almost unbroken prosperity and honour. Born of a good family of Venetian origin, he was brought up among the Alps in the district of Cadore, and there he learnt that love of nature and of mountain scenery which is so conspicuous in his art. Though Giorgione was probably the most precocious of the two friends, for the development of Titian's genius is generally held to have been comparatively slow, he yet seems to have made his mark before he was thirty, and was invited to Padua to execute frescoes in the Scuola del Santo a few years afterwards. After this he was continually employed, not only at Venice, where he succeeded to Bellini's important post of *senseria* in 1516, but at the Courts of Ferrara and Mantua, by the Emperors Charles V. and Philip II., and by the Pope, Paul III. The great esteem in

which the Emperor Charles held him is historical; he made him a Count Palatine of the Empire, a Knight of the Order of S. Iago, and bestowed on him a pension of 400 crowns. Titian painted the Emperor several times, and his picture of that great and melancholy potentate on horseback is perhaps the finest equestrian portrait in the world. Though called to various places in Italy, Germany, and Spain by his great patrons, he maintained his residence at Venice, where his magnificent palace was the centre of intellectual and aristocratic society, and he was well able to sustain his position, not only by his gifts as an artist, but by his manners and culture. From the death of Giovanni Bellini to his own, he was without any rival more serious than Palma, who died forty-eight years before him. The list of the artists of about the same age or younger, whom he outlived, is a long one. Even if we only regard those included in the Catalogue of the National Gallery as belonging to Schools of Venice and the Venetian territories, we find Giorgione, Palma, Cariani, Bonifazio, Savoldo, Lotto, Sebastiano del Piombo, Romanino, Bartolommeo Veneziano, Girolamo da Treviso, Moretto, Girolamo da Santa Croce, Licinio, and Paris Bordone. The pictures by his own hand

in Trafalgar Square cover but about half of his life, but of his vigour in age witnesses may be found no farther off than the Bridgewater Gallery, which contains two pictures, "Diana and Actæon" and "Diana and Callisto," executed when he was eighty-two. At Munich is the "Scourging of Christ," which is eight years later; and in the Venice Academy may be seen a work on which he was engaged when he was struck down by the plague—a "Pietà," which was finished by Palma Giovane, the grand-nephew of his old rival, Palma Vecchio.

Though several fine works by Titian still remain in Venice, including the "Assumption" and the Pesaro altar-piece in the church of the Frari, the interest of that city to the student of his works has been much destroyed since the fire, which burnt the "Death of Peter Martyr," by some considered his masterpiece, and there is now no place where his pictures can be so well studied as at Madrid. The Louvre comes perhaps next, containing as it does "The Madonna with the Rabbit" (an early work), the "Entombment of Christ," "Jupiter and Antiope," and the so-called "Titian and his Mistress," with several other genuine works; but our collection, if small, is choice, though sadly

wanting an example of a class of art in which he was pre-eminent—portraiture. With many of Titian's contemporaries, as with the greatest of his followers, Tintoretto, there is no possibility of appreciating their highest attainments out of Italy. Our example of Bonifazio, the eldest and best of three painters called by that name, is a charming early work of this pupil of Palma. It embodies, as perhaps no other picture in the Gallery does, that gay and irresponsible joy in life which pervades Venetian art of the sixteenth century. Its colours are as fresh as flowers, its spirit as the happiness of a child, yet it does not tell you all about Bonifazio, who in his best works rivals Titian, not only in the richness of his colour, but in the depth of his feeling. To learn of what he was capable one must see his "Dives and Lazarus" in the Venice Academy. Of Cariani it cannot be said that he is so insufficiently represented, as he never attained to a high level, but "The Madonna and Child, with Saints" (No. 1203) is in too bad condition to do him justice. It is interesting mainly for its costumes, its lightheartedness and florid colour, and as another example of those "Santi Conversazioni," of which his master Palma was the inventor, and which

took the place of the more holy "Holy Families" of an earlier art, pictures in which the Virgin became a simple woman of a wholly mundane beauty, and the saints but her friends in rich costumes enjoying themselves somewhat sadly in the open air. Far finer, both as paint and colour, are our two works by Paris Bordone (1500–1570), a pupil of Titian in his old age. Yet in these pictures, fine as they are, it would need a more than usual judgment to discern a painter capable of the magnificent composition of "The Fisherman presenting the Ring of S. Mark to the Doge," which is one of the treasures of the Venice Academy. With our examples of Lotto (1480 (?)—about 1555) we may well be content, as he was greatest as a portrait painter, and we have three of his best works of this class; but yet it is to be regretted that we have nothing to show of his skill in sacred and poetic subjects.

With the exception of Tintoretto there is, however, no artist of high rank so ill-represented here, or so difficult to appreciate, except at Venice, as Carpaccio. Though the contemporary of the Bellini and the precursor of Giorgione and Titian, his genius was so separate that he seems to belong to no section of Venetian art, and in some ways,

especially in the splendour of his colour and his purely naturalistic view of things, to have more affinity with a later generation than with his own. Having regard to the rarity of his pictures, we are fortunate in possessing so genuine and characteristic a work of his as "The Madonna and Child enthroned, with Saints; and the Doge Mocenigo in Adoration" (No. 750). The composition is rather awkward, and the figures ill-proportioned, but the heads and the landscape are fine and the subject is of much interest, for the Doge is supplicating the protection of the Virgin against the plague of 1478. Its colour, with its predominant note of red, and its simple direct execution, is very characteristic of the master. It was painted about the same time that Titian was born, but even in the mature work of Titian we are reminded of this strange and almost solitary genius. From him, as from the Bellini and from Giorgione, and from many another artist, Titian learnt something. Like Raphael, Titian absorbed all that he could from others, but his own individuality was so strong that it asserted its predominance more completely than Raphael's, and had a far greater influence on others. As we look over this great room we see few pictures

(except those of his elders) which would have been quite the same but for Titian. Some glory of his colour touches Lotto and Romanino, some grandeur of pose, Moretto and Veronese; everywhere we see a largeness of conception, a suppleness of movement to which he gave some impulse. On the whole, despite some qualities in which others excelled him, he appears, even in his few works here, as the king of Venetian painters. Though dramatic passion broke into a wilder flame in the Titanic conceptions at Tintoretto, and though the science of grand and noble decoration was never carried so far as by Paolo Veronese, nowhere, except in the masterpieces of Titian, do we see so many and so great gifts so grandly balanced or under so wise and just control.

CHAPTER XI.

SAINTS AND SINNERS.

AT the date of Titian's death (1576) Art had reached its highest point in all the schools of Italy, and nearly everywhere a rapid decline had set in. Most of them were practically extinct. Of the Tuscan School, Andrea del Sarto, the latest-born of the greater painters of Florence, had been dead for forty-six years, Michael Angelo, the last of them to survive, and the nearest in date to Titian (he was two years Titian's senior), twelve. Even their greatest followers, Pontormo and Bronzino, were dead, and more than half a century had passed since Raphael, the last of the great Umbrians, had vanished from the world. Many years also had slipped away since Luini and Sodoma (Milan), Correggio (Parma), Morando (Verona), and Garofalo (Ferrara), had signed the death-warrant of their schools with the final touches of their pencils. There was to be a sort

of revival at Naples and Bologna in the seventeenth century, but, except at Venice, the primary impulse of the wave of Italian painting, which had commenced its grand career at Florence in the thirteenth century, had spent itself completely. At Venice alone, for a few years longer, three great men—Jacopo Bassano, Tintoretto, and Paolo Veronese—were to sustain its movement; but when, in 1594, Tintoretto died, it stopped with the beating of his heart. A century was to elapse before Venice could produce an artist of even such rank as Tiepolo (1692–1769, or Canaletto (1697–1768). But this, as Mr. Kipling might say, is another story.

Before we turn our attention to the work of Titian's juniors, there are many of his contemporaries and some of his elders who must not be passed over. One of the most celebrated of these was Sebastiano Luciani (1485 (?)–1547), more commonly known as Sebastiano del Piombo, from the office of Frate del Piombo, which he held under the Popes Clement VII. and Paul III., from 1531 till his death. Both his subject-pictures in the Gallery show so strongly the influence of Michael Angelo and Raphael (the Raphael of the Cartoons), and have so much in them that is

not Venetian, that they seem to stand aloof from the surrounding works of Titian and his school. Yet he was a Venetian born and bred, and a pupil first of Giovanni Bellini, and afterwards of Giorgione, both of whom influenced his earlier work. But about 1512, when he was seven and twenty, he went to Rome, at the invitation of Agostino Chigi, the rich banker and owner of the Roman villa, since called Farnesina, and now celebrated for the frescoes of Raphael, who painted his "Galatea" there some two years afterwards. Nine lunettes in the same room were filled with mythological subjects by Sebastiano. This was the time of Leo X., who favoured Raphael and neglected Michael Angelo. Sebastiano frequented the society and was influenced by the example of both. Some of his portraits were till recently ascribed to Raphael, whose rival he eventually became. According to Vasari, he was assisted by Michael Angelo, with the intention of eclipsing Raphael. Of such baseness the noble Florentine may be acquitted; but there is no doubt that he was very friendly with Sebastiano del Piombo, and our great picture of "The Resurrection of Lazarus" (No. 1) bears witness to the fact that he helped him with his designs,

as sketches by Michael Angelo for the Lazarus and other figures in the picture are in the British Museum and at Oxford.

The picture was painted (1517–19) for Cardinal Giulio de' Medici (afterwards Pope Clement VII.), for whom also Raphael painted "The Transfiguration." Both works were exhibited together at Rome, and some, it is said, preferred Sebastiano's work to Raphael's, an event which would scarcely have happened but for Michael Angelo's assistance.

This is also, no doubt, the reason why, with all its science and assemblage of beauties, it fails to produce such a lively impression as many more imperfect works which are the result of a more personal impulse. It contains the germs, and even more than the germs, of that eclecticism which now began to show that the real growth of Italian Art had ceased. The desire to combine "all the virtues" had commenced. Sebastiano at Rome and Tintoretto in Venice sought to add Venetian colouring to Florentine design, to combine "the hand of Michael Angelo and the colouring of Titian"—an admirable intention, if it could only be achieved without sacrifice of individuality in the artist. Tintoretto succeeded, indeed, but he proved the rule by the exception.

Sebastiano may be regarded as the last of the great artists of Rome, for although Rome had no school in the sense that the word is applied to other places, where more or less local traditions had been handed down from generation to generation, it was a great centre of patronage, and stimulated Art on so grand a scale that it produced developments peculiar to itself; and there is no doubt that under the Popes Julius II., Leo X., and Clement VII., what is called the "grand style" of painting, so far as the Art bred in Central Italy is concerned, culminated in the great works executed by Michael Angelo, Raphael, and others in the Eternal City. Though the frescoes in the Sistine Chapel, the Vatican, the Farnesina, and other places in Rome, were the blossom or fruit of centuries, they, for that very reason, contained the germs of decay. Whatever influence on Art may be attached to the great political, moral, and social changes of the sixteenth century, there seems no reason to believe that, under different or unaltered conditions, another generation of Italian artists would have arisen to continue the traditions of Italian Art on a higher or even the same level. The aloe had blossomed, and there was the end.

Of all the developments that we see between the Art of the fourteenth and the Art of the sixteenth century, none is more obvious than the growth of portrait. I commenced the first chapter by drawing attention to the almost complete death of this branch of art during the Dark Ages, and drew a contrast between the saints of Giotto and his followers, and those portraits by early Greco-Roman painters, which were found by Mr. Flinders Petrie in a cemetery of the second century in Egypt. We have seen this great natural force—the desire to have permanent records of the faces of our friends and colleagues—after a long suppression, first by anarchy, and secondly by ecclesiasticism, gradually forcing its way back to its normal importance in the most human of arts. It had Nature on its side and was bound to triumph in the end. We have seen it in our Gallery, manifesting itself as simple portrait in the pictures of Uccello, Piero della Francesca, and their followers, and steadily, since the days of Giotto, encroaching gradually on the stereotyped conceptions of the saints and the Holy Family, until these conceptions modify but slightly the features and demeanour of the men and women among whom the painters lived, and at last the

patrons and friends of the painters are not only spectators of the scenes of sacred history, but hold the keys of S. Peter, and sit on the Madonna's throne. In the rooms devoted to the earlier painters, the portraits are few and far between; in the great Venetian saloon, they are by far the most numerous of all the pictures. Without implying that the painters or their patrons were any less moral or religious than their ancestors, it may be said that the sinners have supplanted the saints.

It must not, however, be supposed that because the religious pictures of this period in the National Gallery are fewer than the portraits, their production had declined. On the contrary, they were probably more numerous than at any previous period of Art history, and they were certainly larger in dimension and executed with greater power. No one ever painted such vast pictures of the kind as Tintoretto and Paolo Veronese, or so many of them, as Venice alone still bears witness, while there is scarcely a town or a village in the north of Italy which does not prove the immense vitality of church-painting in the sixteenth century.

The painters of the North are to be divided,

broadly speaking, into two groups—the Venetian and the Lombard,—the first and Eastern belonging to towns in so-called Venetian territory—Brescia, Bergamo, Verona, Vicenza, etc., and affiliated more or less to the School of Venice; and the latter and Western, to towns in the districts of the Milanese and Piedmont, who gravitated towards Milan. Of the sub-Venetian centres of Art, Brescia was one of the most important, and of all its church-painters the chief was Alessandro Bonvicino, generally called Moretto. By him we have two large altar-pieces and two portraits.

On the right hand of the western door of the Venetian Room now hangs the finest of the former, "S. Bernardine of Siena" (No. 625), and on the left of the same door hangs another large altar-piece, in several compartments, by his friend and rival Girolamo Romani, called Romanino, another Brescian, slightly his elder. By the side of Moretto's picture are two small works ascribed to Bartolommeo Montagna, a painter of the previous generation, also Brescian by birth, and of great force and originality, whose finest works were painted at Vicenza, where, or in the neighbourhood, he passed most of his days. We have nothing in the Gallery which fairly represents his austere

genius, which combined much of the noble simplicity of Andrea Mantegna with a more Venetian richness of colour, but "The Virgin and Child" (No. 1098) is characteristic of the severe but exalted naturalism of his figures and the sharp lines of his strongly lighted drapery. "The Madonna and Child" (No. 802) has also much of his somewhat blunt and stern style, but its attribution is doubtful, and it has been ascribed to Giovanni Speranza, a Vicentine painter, and his contemporary.

The change from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century is well marked by the juxtaposition of these Madonnas and Moretto's altar-piece. Although the mien and expression of S. Bernardine, as he holds forth the gilded monogram of Christ, are severe and intense; there is a fulness of form and graciousness of sentiment in the other saints, a flow in their drapery, and a softness of colour, which speak of the later spirit of Venice. To Venice itself it is said that Moretto never went, and all his works are stamped with his own individuality. His types were taken from the fine, well-developed race amongst whom he lived, and his colour is peculiarly his own—quiet and harmonious, and of that "silvery" quality which, generally speaking,

divided the painters of the mainland of the north of Italy from those of Venice. Of this quality, Moretto himself is said to have been the inventor, and it may be noted how much more "silvery" this altar-piece is than its present pendant by Romanino. This artist belonged to a family from Romano, near Treviglio, but was born at Brescia between 1484 and 1487, and spent his time between 1509 and 1513 at Padua and Venice. This is sufficient to account for the richness of the colour and the golden tone of "The Nativity" (No. 297), painted in 1525 for the high altar of S. Alessandro at Brescia. The pictures of which it is composed are full of beauty of form and colour; as a composite decoration, it is imposing, and some of the heads, especially perhaps S. Filippo Benizio and S. Gaudioso in the upper compartments, are fine, but on the whole it is empty in suggestion, and excites but little feeling except admiration of excellent talents employed to order in a somewhat perfunctory manner.

Another artist born at Brescia was Giovanni Girolamo Savoldo (*circâ* 1480–after 1548), who, in spite of a life mainly spent in Venice, seldom approached the golden glow of Titian and Giorgione. We may read in Sir Frederick Burton's

Catalogue that "His colouring is on the whole colder than that of his contemporaries of the Veneto-Brescian School, and his flesh-tints are adust and sombre, although he delighted in the sheen of silken stuffs, contrasting it with the kind of twilight which pervades many of his pictures." This "kind of twilight" pervades the strange, sweet picture "Mary Magdalene approaching the Sepulchre" (No. 1031), a picture which also shows his delight in "the sheen of silken stuffs." In his other picture here, if it really be by him, "The Adoration of the Shepherds" (No. 1377), we see also his love of strange effects of light, but of a more contrasted and deeper kind. In its deep and striking chiaroscuro it reminds one of a greater and later artist, Jacopo da Ponte, commonly called Bassano, and even of the earlier works of Velasquez. It is a very interesting picture, full of imagination, especially in its landscape, and generally in fine condition. For light and effective painting, look at the pigeons in the basket on the right.

Near to Moretto's "S. Bernardine" hangs a charming picture by Girolamo dai Libri (1474–1556), a Veronese master, who was both the senior and survivor of Moretto. Of the Veronese painters

not already mentioned (unless, perhaps, incidentally) in these papers, the Gallery contains examples of nine, including Paolo Veronese, who is classed generally under the Venetian School. So far as this Gallery is concerned, Veronese art commences with Vittore Pisano, of whose picture "S. Anthony and S. George" something was said in the seventh chapter, and since this was written, our national collection has been enriched by that other example of this most rare and interesting master to which I there referred, "The Miraculous Stag appearing to S. Eustace"—an acquisition of the highest importance, not only on account of the scarcity of his easel pictures, of which only two or three are known, but on account of its marvellous execution and the number and variety of the animals introduced.*

Animals also form a great portion of the interest of two panels (Nos. 1211 and 1212), ascribed to another Veronese painter, Dominico Morone (1442–1500?), which represent scenes at a tournament in a lively manner. He was the father of Francesco Morone (1473–1529), a much better artist, who

* It may be noted also that the Gallery has acquired recently an interesting panel in the style of Gentile de Fabriano, Pisano's fellow-worker at Venice.

painted the delightful "Madonna and Child" (No. 285). Though born so late, Francesco's art, as will be seen by this picture, belongs, in spirit and execution, to the fifteenth century. In its pretty types and sweet expression, in the daintiness of its finish, and the bright variegation of its colour, it stands very much by itself, and betrays little influence from other artists, whether of Venice or elsewhere outside Verona. It has, however, very much in common with the picture already mentioned by Girolamo dai Libri (1474–1556), to which artist it was once ascribed. The types, the colour, the execution, are all similar. They were, indeed, friends and brother artists, and almost of the same age. They worked together on the organ doors of S. Maria in Organo at Verona, and it is probable that they were both pupils of Girolamo's father, who was called "dai Libri" for his skill in the illumination of books. In spite of its "over-restoration," nothing can much exceed, for gentleness and sweetness, this vision of "The Madonna, Infant Christ, and S. Anne" (No. 748), with its Virgin seated on her mother's lap, and holding her beautiful Child, surrounded with roses and canopied by a lemon tree, while three little angels, as lovely as Bellini's, are making music on the

steps below. This is one of the many pictures in the Gallery which are specially mentioned by Vasari. To the same group belongs the work of another and greater master of Verona, who drew instruction from both Domenico and Francesco Morone, if not from Girolamo dai Libri also. This was Paolo Morando, commonly called Cavazzola (1486–1522). By him we have two works of great refinement in form and expression, "S. Rock with the Angel" (No. 735), and "The Madonna and Child, with S. John the Baptist and an Angel, in a Landscape" (No. 777). As usual in the works of this exquisite artist, the flesh tints are rather cold and dull—an effect increased probably by the process of time, which has allowed the shadows, always ashy, to assert themselves unduly.*

This little group of pictures of the Veronese School—by Francesco Morone, Girolamo dai Libri, and Morando—inspired with the earlier feeling of Italian art, innocent, childlike, and devout, seemed

* The pictures of Francesco Morone, Girolamo dai Libri, and Morando form such a distinct group, that the manner in which they are at present distributed in the Gallery is to be deplored. Many improvements in hanging have lately been made in the Gallery, and it is to be hoped that they will soon be followed by bringing these, and, indeed, all the Veronese pictures, together.

almost an anachronism in contrast with the more "advanced" Venetian work of this period, which was that of Giorgione and Titian, Sebastiano and Lotto. They are more in sympathy with the work of Bellini, of Francia, of Francia Bigio, and Raphael. Of later Veronese work (excepting that of the great Paolo, who was born more than half a century after Morando), our Gallery shows no sign except the rather curious than beautiful picture by Michele da Verona, "The Meeting of Coriolanus with Volumnia and Veturia" (No. 1214). Of other works by Veronese masters we have only two curious panels by an unknown master (Nos. 1135 and 1136); an extremely fine head, by Francesco Bonsignori (1455–1519); "Portrait of a Venetian Senator" (No. 736); a weak "Virgin and Child" (No. 1134), by Liberale da Verona (1451–1535); a very lively and interesting "Death of Dido" (No. 1336), ascribed to the same master; and a poor row of "Portraits of the Giusti Family of Verona," by Giolfino, the friend of Mantegna, painted for the *predella* of an altar-piece.

Yet our collection of Veronese art is very complete compared with others, at least out of Italy, and is sufficient to show how strongly it was

influenced by local feeling, which kept it for the most part out of the swim of Venetian progress. Those that lived and worked at home appear to have painted almost entirely for the churches, and at Verona, alone almost of all the cities of Italy, there seems to have been little demand for portraits. It produced no portrait-painter of eminence, and though the fact does not prove much, it may be noted that the only fine portrait by a Veronese master in the Gallery (that by Bonsignori) is of a Venetian Senator.*

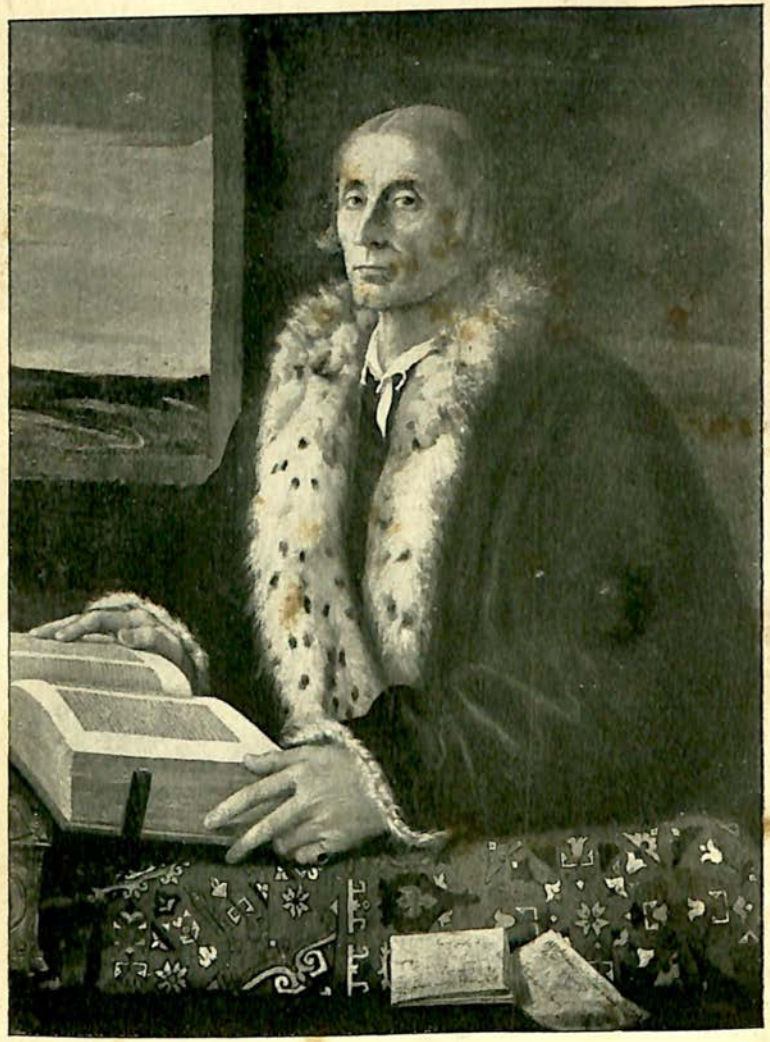
Although we possess no portrait by either Titian or Tintoretto, the Venetian room is well stored with goodly specimens of this branch of art. They include, beside those already mentioned, two beautiful anonymous works (Nos. 595 and 1121), a specimen of the rare master Bartolommeo Veneziano (No. 287), an interesting example of Licinio (No. 1309), and a splendid portrait of a grand Genoese lady (No. 674), by Paris Bordone (1500–1570), glorious in golden hair and rosy skin, and superb in rich brocade, a magnificent

* The secrets of the Veronese School have not been thoroughly explored, and it would be rash to make any sweeping statement before we read that book on Veronese art which has been so long expected from the pen of Dr. J. P. Richter.

example of the artist's power as a colourist and flesh-painter.

Our two examples of Sebastiano del Piombo's portraiture, however much they have suffered, still retain a magisterial grandeur of style, which speaks not only of the artist, but also of the dignified mien and manners of the Rome of Leo X. They were both painted in Rome, and one of them, "Portraits of Sebastiano del Piombo and the Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici" (No. 20), was once ascribed to Raphael. It contains the best and most authentic portrait of the painter. The other (No. 24) is also a celebrated work, and was supposed to be the portrait of Giulia Gonzaga, mentioned by Vasari as "a divine picture," which was painted for Cardinal Ippolito. If we turn from these works to those by Lorenzo Lotto on the opposite wall, we shall be struck with a more than merely artistic change. The pomp and dignity of court and palace, which make Sebastiano's figures loom so large and grandiose, is gone, and in its place we find a comparatively homely simplicity, which impresses us less perhaps at first, but interests us more. It is not the social status or official importance of his sitter, with which Lorenzo Lotto was engaged, but with the

men and women themselves, their dispositions and inner life, so far as these may be expressed by the countenance. Though some of them, perhaps all of them, look straight out at you, it is not with the object of being admired or of making the best of themselves, but simply because the artist has chosen to paint them so, in order to express their individualities more completely. They, despite their open outward look, are unconscious of observation, engaged with their own thoughts as if alone. This may be said even of the "Portrait of the Prothonotary Apostolic Giuliano" (No. 1105), the finest of the three pictures, the most carefully and beautifully drawn, the coolest and also the most harmonious in colour. The refined intellectual head, with its calm and strong expression, owes its charm to inner force and sweetness of character, and not to any accidental circumstance of rank or office, nor even to the ermine on his velvet gown, although this and his grey hair add no doubt to the total impression of his character as well as to the beauty of the picture. It is evident that the artist felt his subject strongly and executed it with unusual care; compare, for instance, the hands with those of the rather wooden construc-



THE PROTHONOTARY APOSTOLIC JULIANO.—*Lotto*

tions which he has given to himself, if himself it be, in "A Family Group" (No. 1047), a picture supposed to represent the painter, his wife, and two children.

Lorenzo Lotto (about 1480–1555?), who has hitherto been regarded as a scholar of the Bellini, but is now claimed by Mr. Berenson as a pupil of Alvise Vivarini,* was born at Venice about 1480, and was an artist of great susceptibility, taking colour from so many artists, that his pictures have passed under many names. His colour is generally Venetian; at times it is glowing almost as Titian; at others, as in our picture of the Prothonotary, it is more silvery, like Moretto or Moroni. (Compare the ermine in Nos. 1105 and 299.) Of a fitful and wandering temperament, he visited many places, including Treviso, Bergamo, and Rome, and so came under the influence, for a short time, of Raphael and other painters not of the Venetian School. Throughout all his shiftings he maintained his own individuality, and his temporary deflections of style are to be traced most clearly perhaps in

* See Lorenzo Lotto, "An essay on Constructive Criticism," by Bernhard Berenson (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1895); a book in which this artist's life and works have been treated for the first time in an exhaustive manner.

his altar-pieces, of which he executed many of great importance and beauty at Recanati, Treviso, Bergamo, Venice, and elsewhere. He was of a religious temperament, and spent his last days at Loreto in devotion to the Church. In England he is represented chiefly by portraits, the most celebrated of which, outside this Gallery, are the "Lucretia" at Dorchester House and the "Andrea Odoni" at Hampton Court. The earliest one in the National Gallery is No. 699, "Portraits of Agostino and Niccolo della Torre," dated 1515. It has been conjectured that the figure of Agostino, who was professor of Medicine in the University of Padua, was painted at that city, and that the artist then took the canvas to Bergamo, and inserted the other brother, who was resident there. The awkward composition certainly favours such a theory. Niccolo is palpably an afterthought, and seems also (unless he were much the bigger man of the two) to be out of scale. "The Family Group" (No. 1047) is a naïve and lively picture, introducing us for once into the midst of a real Italian family circle of the sixteenth century, although the domestic feeling is a little spoilt by the careful costume of the lady and the direction of both the parents'

eyes, which pay no regard whatever to the children. Their faces have that glow of inner life so characteristic of the master, but one doubts if they were drawn specially for the picture, and indeed the whole work, though a charming composition, seems a collection of separate studies, without original unity of intention. They are charming studies, nevertheless, especially that of the little girl on the table, whose expression of interest in the cherries has been caught with singular felicity. Mr. Berenson assigns this picture to the year 1523, and the "Prothonotary" to the year before. The scenes through the windows in both these pictures are beautiful, and so "modern," that they might have been painted by an artist of the present century. The same might almost be said of the portraits themselves, for Lotto was one of the first who was mainly interested in the simple humanity of his sitters, and succeeds, almost as Rembrandt succeeded, in interesting us also in them, by that insight into their very spirit which makes their presence felt almost as in life.

This gift was shared, if not quite to the same extent, by Moretto, whose two portraits here, though noblemen perhaps first of all, are distinctly

"men" also, of whom we know something and should like to know more. If we take into account style and character, drawing and colour, there are no finer portraits in the Gallery than these. One (No. 299) is of Count Sciarra Martinengo Cesaresco, the other (No. 1025) is probably a portrait of one of the Fenaroli family, and, taken together, they give a noble impression of the fine physique and dignified bearing of the noble families of Brescia. Here, better than in his altar-pieces in the Gallery, may be seen Moretto's perfect and unique gift of cool but splendid colour. The Count Sciarra is seated in a free but spirited attitude, and from the label in his cap may be supposed to be yearning to avenge the assassination of his father. The other is distinguished by the easy grace of his posture, and his rich and curious dress; one leg is hosed in brown, the other in red, and the feet are incased in shoes, or slippers, of different shapes. Moretto's pupil, Giambattista Moroni (about 1525–1578), great portrait-painter though he was, could not equal his master in reflecting the fine style of the Italian nobility. By him we have also two portraits of the Brescian aristocracy, but though they are not without dignity and strength of

character, they are but commonplace persons by the side of Moretto's grandees. One of them (No. 1022) is supposed to be a member of the same family as No. 1025, and is finely painted in a very reticent scheme of cool, almost cold, colour; the other (No. 1316), which looks almost as if it had been painted for its pendant, is the less agreeable of the two, on account of the redness of the flesh tints, a characteristic of his earlier manner. It is, however, masterly in execution—a merit which must also be accorded to the not very pleasant "Portrait of an Italian Lady" (No. 1023), who is supposed to have been the wife of No. 1022. On the whole, so far, at least, as this Gallery is concerned, Moroni's genius is best seen in his portraits of less distinguished personages; in his "Lawyer" (No. 742), his "Ecclesiastic" (No. 1024), and in the most celebrated, if not the best of all, his famous "Tailor" (No. 697). If we take into consideration the excellence of its preservation (it seems as fresh in colour as the day it was painted), the crispness of its execution, and its spirited character, the "Lawyer" ought to be awarded the first place. But the "Tailor," besides its beautiful and subtly gradated tones and its life-like attitude, has the great merits of extreme

simplicity and naturalness. The action of the man, as he stays his shears for a moment to listen to a customer, gives the picture the charm of incident, the attraction of a *genre* picture added to that of a portrait; and so it has become, and deservedly become, one of the most popular of all portraits by an "old master." Though deficient in intellectual quality and somewhat faded, as it seems to me, in colour, it is perfect in character, exquisite in tone, and completely intelligible to everybody—a beautiful picture and a peepshow into the sixteenth century, which tells us that the men then living were very much like ourselves. We meet Tagliapanni (for this was his name) every day in the street.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FALL OF THE LEAF.

In Room No. IX. will be found all the pictures which belong to that Western section of the North-Italian Art, which had its centre in Milan. This section may be generally described as the Lombard School, and includes artists of Lodi, Cremona, Parma, Pavia, Modena, and other places, besides those of Milan and west of it. Before Leonardo da Vinci (about 1483–1485) was called to Milan by Ludovico Sforza, there had sprung up a strong native Lombard School, with marked local characteristics, of which Vincenzo Foppa (the elder) was the founder. The year of the birth of this great artist is unknown, but the earliest date found upon any of his works is 1456. This is a Crucifixion, one of two panels by him in the Carrara Gallery at Bergamo. He is supposed to have been born at Brescia, and to have studied under Squarcione at Padua, but he worked

almost entirely in Milan and its neighbourhood. Of his many pupils and imitators the National Gallery contains examples of two, Ambrogio Borgognone and Macrino d'Alba. He died at Milan in 1492. He (Foppa) was too old and Borgognone too faithful to his previous ideals to be influenced by Leonardo, so that in the works we possess by these two masters we see the earlier Milanese School in all its purity.

"The Adoration of the Kings" (No. 729) by Foppa, though its colours have sadly faded, still retains its pristine dignity of design. The Virgin and her Child are both natural and noble, the other figures are large in style and finely grouped, and the whole composition is imposing but free. The simple action of the black boy who is adjusting the spur of his master, relieves without impairing the solemnity of the effect. The work is plainly that of a great and original artist who, though clinging, like Pisanello, Vivarini and Crivelli, to the old tradition of enriching his vestures with ornaments gilded in relief, has the true spirit of a painter, and who has preserved unspoilt the native force of his imagination, though he may have learnt dignity of form and a fine style of draftmanship in the classical School of

Padua. This picture was long regarded as a work of Foppa's pupil Bramantino (1436–1514), the son of the great architect (and painter) Bramante, who himself was working in Milan from 1474 to 1499.

Foppa was the contemporary of Andrea Mantegna. Borgognone, his pupil, was about the same age as Pinturicchio, coming between Perugino and Raphael, to both of which artists Borgognone has been compared, more probably on account of the spirit of his work than its technique. Nevertheless, there is one picture here ascribed to Pinturicchio (No. 703), which, in the pallor of its flesh tones as well as its *naïveté*, reminds one somewhat of Borgognone as represented in the Gallery.

Ambrogio Borgognone (or Da Fossano), who was born about 1455, and died about 1523, was strictly a religious painter. His works are full of a devotion almost as pure as that of Fra Angelico, and their execution is as simple as their spirit. Nothing can exceed the gentle humility of his shy, sweet Madonnas, with their long-lashed eyes, as we see them in "A Triptych" (No. 1077) and "The Virgin and Child" (No. 1410). They, like all except his latest work, are in *tempera*, and the flesh tints are so very pale, that it is difficult

to believe that some warmer glazings have not disappeared. The side panels of the Triptych, representing the Agony in the Garden and Christ bearing the Cross, aim at no grandeur of style or cleverness of execution, but are pure and unstrained in their pathos; and the angels, with their honest, kind, but plain faces, are evidently taken straight from life, without any regard to ideal beauty. We can see something like them among the "Family Portraits" (Nos. 779, 780), where the plain and the pretty, the stern and the simple, are mingled together with strange fidelity and impartiality. "The Virgin and Child," recently acquired from Lady Eastlake's sale, is a perfect example of the artist's smaller work, and it has a very interesting background representing what is, no doubt, a faithful view of part of Pavia as it appeared at the time, when the old façade of the Certosa was not yet completed. One most important example of the master, "The Marriage of S. Catherine of Alexandria" (No. 298), is also the finest. This picture represents the *sposalizio* of S. Catherine of Siena as well as that of S. Catherine of Alexandria. The much more modern saint of Siena (1347–1380), whose house and bed are still shown in that city, wears her Dominican

habit, as in the picture of her marriage, by Lorenzo da San Severino (No. 249). The Infant Christ has a ring in either hand. One he places on the finger of the Egyptian Queen and the other he holds out to the Italian nun. With a sweet smile of loving encouragement the Virgin turns her face to the latter. In simplicity and sincerity the portraits (Nos. 779, 780) are not excelled by any in the Gallery. In tone they are delightful, and they are painted with a singularly sure and sensitive touch. Although most of them are plain, there is at least one girl's head that reminds one of the type favoured by Luini and Leonardo da Vinci.

I put Luini first, because, though the influence of Leonardo upon his art is undoubted, he had formed his first style before that influence began. Little or nothing is known of his life. He is generally supposed to have been born at Luino (whence his name), but even this is doubtful. He is said to have been a pupil of one Scotto, of whom nothing is known, and what may be regarded as the first authentic document in his life is a "Pietà" in S. Maria della Passione at Milan, which was painted before 1510, a work which clearly belongs to the old Lombard School, and

goes far to prove that his real master was Borgognone. The first date on any work of his is 1521, and he was still living at Luino in 1533, after which all trace of him is lost. Our picture, "Christ disputing with the Doctors; or, Christ arguing with the Pharisees" (No. 18), belongs to his second or Leonardesque manner. Like a large number of Luini's pictures, it was long ascribed to Leonardo himself, and shows how strongly he had been impressed by that artist's famous "Last Supper," in the convent of S. Maria delle Grazie. In no work, perhaps, has any artist approached more nearly to the refined characterisation of Leonardo, and that profound but sweet expression, which gives "the mind and music beaming from the face;" but it lacks the virility of the great Florentine. It is over-sweet, over-polished, but lovely, nevertheless. Unfortunately, we have no example of Luini's fresco, a method in which he excelled, nor of his later or third manner, in which he threw off the excessive influence of Leonardo, and again became truly himself—one of the most pathetic of all masters, one of the most refined of all colourists.

The works of the most powerful artists are nearly always remarkable for some distinctive

quality, which they carry to the verge of excess, and it is this peculiarity that is generally seized by their followers for special imitation. The result is ever fatal. The forced poses and strained gestures of Michael Angelo lose all their grandeur in a Volterra; Jacob Jordaens failed to perceive that the splendid exuberance of Rubens needed all the sanction of all his genius to redeem it from vulgarity; and even the smile of Leonardo becomes intolerable when repeated by men who could only catch its external sweetness. A typical instance of the natural, almost inevitable, deterioration of the Leonardesque is presented by our fine example of Bernardino Lanini (about 1508–1578), "The Holy Family" (700), with the Magdalen, Pope Gregory the Great, and S. Paul. Here we see the whole group, suffused as it were with the charm of the Leonardo smile; even the stern features of the great Gregory himself have caught the gentle affectation. The picture was painted in 1543, and is our latest example of what the labels in the National Gallery now call the "post-Vincian" School of Milan. The painter was a pupil of a much greater artist, Gaudenzio Ferrari of Varallo, the rival of Luini, of whose work the Gallery at present possesses no example.

Another Piedmontese painter of the same time was Girolamo Giovanone, who is represented in the Gallery by an agreeable altar-piece, "Madonna and Child, with Saints" (No. 1295).

It is one of the peculiarities of the Lombard School, as distinguished from that of Venice, that its tendency, at least in oil-painting, was towards a more careful rendering of detail and greater minuteness of finish, rather than a larger conception and broader handling. Roughly speaking, this was due to the example of Leonardo. There was no Titian or Giorgione in the Western School of Lombardy, and the only Milanese artist who, as represented in the National Gallery, shows direct influence from Venice, derived it from the School of Bellini. This was Andrea Solario (1460, after 1515), by whom we possess two splendid portraits, as remarkable for their large style and strength of character as they are for their perfect modelling and fine finish. These are the "Portrait of Gio. Cristoforo Longono" (No. 734) and "Portrait of a Venetian Senator" (No. 923), works to which I have already referred in connection with Antonello da Messina. There is, no doubt, a distinct Flemish character, both in the style of the presentment of these strong-willed Italians and in

GIO: CRISTOFORO LONGONO.—*Solario.*

the technique of the pictures. To account for this, Morelii has suggested a possible visit to Flanders during the artist's two years' sojourn in Normandy, about 1507–1509. But it is known that Solario, who was born at Solario, near Milan, about 1460, went with his brother Cristofano to Venice in 1490, and returned to Milan in 1493. At this time the strong effect of Antonello, who introduced the Flemish system of oil-painting, and the Flemish style of portraiture, into Venice about 1473, was in full force, and Antonello himself was still residing there, so that no other explanation would appear to be needed as to the appearance of Flemish characteristics in these portraits by Solario, one of which is of a Venetian Senator, and was probably painted between 1490 and 1493, while the other is dated 1505. Of the two, the former, with the pink in his hand, specially reminds one of Antonello and the Flemings; but both are of the highest quality, and the landscape background of No. 734 is particularly rich and beautiful. It is rather as a follower of the Venetian School influenced by Antonello, than as a follower of Leonardo da Vinci, that Solario appears here; but near these pictures hang two others which are by Leonardo's known pupils,

Beltraffio and Marco da Oggionno. Of these by far the finer and more original artist was Beltraffio (1467–1516), and our "The Madonna and Child" (No. 728) is one of his most beautiful works. Although distinctly a follower of Leonardo, he has a style of his own, which makes his work easily distinguishable from those of the less inspired pupils of this master. Nothing can show much more distinctly the difference in feeling between the pre- and post-Vincian art of Milan than a comparison between this picture and those by Borgognone. In the more perfect chiaroscuro, the richer colour, the more studied execution, we see the pupil of Da Vinci, and moreover there is a physical and intellectual refinement in Beltraffio's types, which is absent from the more homely but perhaps more guileless and spiritual conceptions of Borgognone.

In this there may be something of caste, for Beltraffio was of noble birth, regarded himself, we are told, rather as an amateur than a professional artist, and probably drew his types from the well-bred and cultured society of Milan among which he moved. Whereas Beltraffio's work, not only in this respect, but in colour and conception, is marked with individuality, there is little in the

work of Marco da Oggionno, "The Madonna and Child" (No. 1149), that exceeds in merit what might be expected of any patient and uninspired follower of Leonardo. It is highly finished, but has lost a great deal of its original surface. By its side hangs another very highly finished picture, remarkable for its beautiful landscape, the "S. John the Baptist" (No. 1152), by Martino Piazza, a painter of Lodi. He belonged to the School of Borgognone, but in this work at least shows the predominant influence of Leonardo. Two panels of saints by Macrino d'Alba (Nos. 1200, 1201), a Piedmontese of little merit, and two small and unimportant works—"The Madonna and Child, with Saints" (No. 1144) and the "Head of our Lord" (No. 1337), by a much greater artist, Giovannantonio Bazzi, commonly called Il Sodoma (1477–1549)—almost complete our examples of Milanese Art. Sodoma came for a while under the influence of Leonardo, but his genius was too strong to be overpowered by it. He was the only Milanese painter who fully shared in the later development of the Renaissance; but our little pictures show rather his defects than his merits, and his fine imagination, his feeling for beauty, his pathetic and dramatic power, can only be

studied in his grand works at Rome and Siena. It was in the latter city that he principally worked, and it was there that he died.

Antonio Allegri (commonly called Correggio, after his birthplace), a junior but contemporary of Sodoma, Michael Angelo, Raphael, Andrea del Sarto, and Titian, was an artist whose name cannot be excluded from the small circle of very great painters. So pronounced and distinct is the character of his genius, that he has been looked upon as a sort of *lusus naturæ*, an artist created whole, without the help of masters. His artistic genesis has become somewhat less of a puzzle since it was discovered by Morelli that he received his first training, or at least influences, from the School of Ferrara. His early works, discovered by Morelli and others, betray such marked resemblance to those of Costa and others of that school, that it is impossible to doubt that he derived from them his first technic and style. We are nevertheless almost as much in the dark as before with regard to his subsequent development. Judging only from the general impression of his work as seen in the National Gallery, the Ferrarese is perhaps the last of all the schools from which his art would seem to be derived. There seems

to be little or no affinity between his "Education of Cupid," his "Ecce Homo," his "Madonna and Child," and his "Agony in the Garden," and those pictures by his nearest Ferrarese contemporaries, Mazzolino, Garofalo, and Ortolano, which are to be found in Room V.

Unfortunately we have no picture which adequately represents Dosso Dossi (1479?–1542), the most poetical of the later painters of Ferrara. The attribution of both our pictures bearing his name—"The Adoration of the Magi" (No. 640) and "A Muse instructing a Court Poet (?)" (No. 1234)—has indeed been doubted. His colour was brilliant and original, he possessed considerable fancy, and his larger compositions, especially of classical and poetical subjects, attract by their rich arrangement of figure, drapery, and landscape. He also painted admirable portraits; but his drawing was defective, his imagination deficient in grasp and concentration, and his best work does not rise to the level of his greatest contemporaries in other schools. It is yet possible that he may have stimulated, in some small measure, the much more individual and beautiful genius of Correggio. It is difficult to suppose this of Mazzolino or Garofalo, or even of the artist called

L'Ortolano, whose altar-piece of "S. Sebastian, S. Rock, and S. Demetrius" (No. 669), though a work of singular merit, especially in the figure of S. Demetrius, a noble conception splendidly executed, is not in the least degree Correggiesque.*

On the other hand, Correggio's pictures here claim affinities with many other artists of other schools, with Andrea del Sarto, with Lotto, with Sodoma, with Leonardo, with Luini. Even in his earlier works, which, by their colour and small mannerisms, betray the influence of Ferrara and Venice, he showed his own individuality, particularly perhaps in that intensity of tender pathos which had scarcely been attained before by any painter. Sometimes, as in our "Ecce Homo" (No. 15), it reaches a pitch which borders on effeminacy, and almost makes a luxury of grief. The acute distress of the Saviour is ennobled by the dignity of patient endurance, heightened by the fainting figure of the Virgin, and contrasted with the coarseness of the soldier; and to these appeals to our emotions—which are common to the treatment of the subject—he adds the utmost beauty of colour, the most graceful rhythm of line, the softest effects of shadow, and the most

* According to Morelli, this picture is by Garofalo.

THE HOLY FAMILY.—*Correggio*

lovely types of the human body which he can imagine. It is in these respects that we see his affinity with such artists as Leonardo, Luini, and Sodoma. The Christ is no longer conceived as emaciated with suffering; the ascetic ideal had, indeed, long given way to one which asserted the grandeur and dignity of the human form, but this is now succeeded by another, which presents the Saviour of the world as the most gentle and beautiful of men, and the tenderness of His body, exquisitely sensitive to pain, is almost as much insisted upon as the tenderness of His soul. Far less open to criticism is the lovely little "Holy Family" (No. 23, known as "La Vierge au Panier"), which, despite its size, is one of the most celebrated pictures in the world. It contains the essence of what was best in Correggio's genius —his innocent gaiety, his tender sentiment, his charm of line, and supreme subtlety of colour and chiaroscuro. He felt and expressed, as few artists except Giorgione have done, the innate sweetness and beauty of human nature and human existence at its best and most refined; and this Holy Family becomes divine, not from a miraculous vision of the supernatural, but from an intense appreciation of what is most lovely

in terrestial life. This instinct to detect beauty of form and spirit, pure and unsoiled by any baseness, enabled him to treat subjects from pagan mythology with a frank innocence which only Giorgione could rival. We are most fortunate in possessing what is, perhaps, his most exquisite work of this class, "Mercury instructing Cupid in the presence of Venus" (No. 10). It has been shockingly ill-treated, and the Venus must have lost much of her pristine charm, but even the severe abrasions which the picture has undergone have not destroyed its ineffable beauty. Its warm white limbs still glow in their softly rounded beauty through their envelope of air; the rosy-cheeked Cupid, with his variegated wings, still stands, the most winsome of scholars, before the most graceful of schoolmasters; and enchantment still lingers in the beaming face and rhythmic form of his mother. Where else shall we find so pure and perfect a piece of poetical comedy? This picture alone would entitle Correggio to a place among that first rank of artists, which can only be assigned to those men who have done what no one else could do, in a manner equally their own.

It is only in Parma, in the cupolas of S. Paolo

and the cathedral, that Correggio's extraordinary power in light and shade (producing almost optical illusion; as the figures seem to float and swim in sunlit air) can be seen, and there only his audacities in foreshortening, and the extraordinary life which he could impart to his creations. Here he rivals Tintoretto himself in the swiftness, if not in the violence, of motion. In our pictures we see him rather as an exquisite sentimentalist, and master of chiaroscuro, with a leaning towards Milan rather than Venice, to the School of Leonardo rather than that of Titian. Like Raphael and Michael Angelo, he conducted art in a perfectly new and independent path to a point beyond which progress was impossible. In his work, as in theirs, we see the seeds of inevitable decay, the tendency to over-artifice, over-sweetness, in a word, over-ripeness, necessarily ending in insincerity, affectation, and theatrical display. Such were the autumnal glories of Italian Art, more splendid than ever, but attended by the fall of the leaf. The decadence is plainly visible in the work of his follower, Francesco Mazzola, called Parmigiano (1503–1540), an artist of great talents, but without sufficient native force to free himself from the influence of Correggio and Michael

Angelo. By him we have a very clever and characteristic example, "The Vision of S. Jerome" (No. 33), in which we can plainly trace the example of these great men.

Luini, Sodoma, and Correggio were all dead and buried long before that last magnificent burst of Italian Art which, under Paolo Veronese and Tintoretto, carried on the great traditions of the Venetian School to the threshold of the seventeenth century. Their most distinguished contemporary in the western district of North Italy was Gaudenzio Ferrari, who may be said to have been the last of the greater artists whose principal aim was the perfection of spiritual expression.

After Fra Angelico, who followed the old ideal of religious emotion with a sacred purity which no one has equalled, the range of art grew wider, and one of its strongest developments was in the direction of grandly decorative and semi-dramatic compositions, in which subjective expression was subdued to the minimum required to tell the story. It is not to the succession of Fra Angelico and Perugino that Veronese belonged, but to that of Ghirlandajo and Titian.

No one of these great scenic masters is so well represented in the National Gallery as Veronese,

or, to call him by his real name, Paolo Caliari (1528–1588), the last-born of all the greater painters of Italy. It contains no less than ten works ascribed to him. Eight of these are undoubtedly genuine and important, and one is a masterpiece in such fine condition that it has been described as "perhaps the only existing criterion by which to estimate the genuine original colouring of Paolo Veronese." This is "The Family of Darius at the Feet of Alexander, after the Battle of Issus, B.C. 333" (No. 294), a magnificent example of a class of composition much in vogue in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in which living persons were represented as the actors in a famous event of ancient history. Whether this fashion arose, as has been urged, from a fine feeling for the dignity of art, or from a desire for self-glorification, it was certainly the occasion of many splendid pictures, among which this is one of the most notable. The painter was little troubled by fears of anachronisms;—the costumes of the captive family are frankly those of contemporary Venetians; the faces are as frankly portraits of the Pisani family;—but he has taken every advantage of the exalted rank of the fictitious personages and the historical importance

of the event, to aggrandise the composition by all the circumstance of imperial affluence. The gorgeous palace, the magnificent retinue, the imposing presence of Alexander and his generals, and, it may be added, of the famous horse Bucephalus, combine to form a spectacle of surpassing splendour. Sumptuous as it all is, a fine taste regulates the display, which is unspoilt by vulgarity or affectation. Of special grace and distinction is the figure of Alexander himself, so finely contrasted in its unostentatious simplicity with the self-conscious haughtiness of Hephæstion. It is impossible in any words to do justice to the merits of its execution, the splendour of its colour, the silveriness of its tone, the unobtrusive power of its chiaroscuro, or the extraordinary skill in its composition—so full and yet uncrowded, so complex and yet seemingly so artless. Never was a corner more admirably or apparently more accidentally filled than by that graceful figure of the boy leaning upon the shield, while the superlative value to the composition of that monkey on the balustrade is scarcely noticed till you hide it with your hand. It says much for the princely munificence of the time, and the generosity of the painter, that this work

ST HELENA.—*Paolo Veronese.*

should have been presented by the artist to the Pisani family in recognition of their hospitality at their villa at Este, where it was painted.

Not nearly so fine nor so well preserved, but still an admirable and important example of the master, is "The Adoration of the Magi" (No. 268), once the most famous of the treasures of the Church of San Silvestro, of Venice. In this the service of bringing together the foreground groups is performed, not by a monkey, but by the youth with the red cap and whip.

The other works of Caliari include the gracious and graceful "Consecration of S. Nicholas of Myra" (No. 26), with its exquisitely balanced angel; the lovely "S. Helena" (1041), and the four splendidly decorative allegorical groups once belonging to Lord Darnley (Nos. 1318–1326).

My last words must be given to the three pictures which are all we have to represent the tremendous genius of Tintoretto (Jacopo Robusti), well called Il Furioso. To those who have been to Venice they will seem inconsiderate trifles, almost absurdly inadequate to give even a faint notion of his incomparable power. But they are better than nothing, and so far as they go, are characteristic. The huge sketch of "Christ

Washing the Feet of His Disciples" (No. 1130), though empty and uninteresting, is characteristic from these very defects. No other master would have spent so much paint and canvas on a sketch. Even his tentative efforts were on a gigantic scale. But it is characteristic in other ways—in its vigour and hasty audacity, in its large and powerful scheme of light and shade, in the long retreating perspective of the chamber, in the presentation of the back view of a figure in the foreground, to mention no others. The "S. George Destroying the Dragon" (No. 16), is also a sketch, rapid and careless, but full to the corners with the rapid heat of a tumultuous conception, in which earth, sky, and creatures, living and dead, are impregnated with the force of an august imagination. In the "Origin of the Milky Way" (No. 1313), we have an example of Tintoretto's treatment of classical subjects, which is still more characteristic, in the headlong flight of Jupiter, and the daring way in which the white tapering limbs of Juno are flung across the canvas. It cannot be compared in beauty of composition to the artist's exquisite works of this class in the Ducal Palace at Venice, but in certain qualities of light and colour, especially in lustre and variegation, it

THE ORIGIN OF THE MILKY WAY.—*Tintoretto.*

would be difficult to excel. His colour is not as other men's. It has not the sumptuous repose of Veronese, or the ordered glory of Titian. It is irregular, almost spasmodic; but it is charged, as no other artist's is charged, with the emotion of the subject, and its effect is overpowering. The finest pictures of Titian are as exquisite music played by a band of stringed instruments, but in Tintoretto's orchestra are "trumpets also and shawms." Though not the last to be born, he was the last to die of all the supreme artists of Italy, and though among them may be found many of finer balance, there was none of greater force or wider range. One thing can at least be said of no other man, and that is, that the strength of his individuality was so great that he could assimilate even Michael Angelo.

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